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ABSTRACT

This revised edition of the first volume of the "Best of the Running Record Newsletter" contains 23 articles published between March 1989 and Spring 1998--some selections are from the now out-of-print first edition. Articles are arranged by subject matter to assist the reader in finding articles which address a particular point of interest. Section 1, Historical Perspective, contains the following articles: "Why Reading Recovery Works, May 1989" (Barbara Watson); "An Early Intervention To Prevent Literacy Learning Difficulties: What Is Possible? Spring 1994" (Marie M. Clay); and "Welcome Speech, Fall 1995" (William D. Lynch). Section 2, Research and Rationales, contains the following articles: "Reading Recovery Swift, Effective in Reversing Reading Failure, MacArthur Study Find, Winter 1992" (Gay Su Pinnell); "The Role of the University in Reading Recovery in North America, Spring 1993" (Janet S. Gaffney and Gay Su Pinnell); and "Rationale for Teaching At Least Four Reading Recovery Children, Spring 1997" (Noel Jones). Section 3, Reading Recovery Training, contains these articles: "Reading Recovery Teachers as Lifelong Learners: Teachers in Transition, Autumn 1991" (Diane DeFord) and "Interpreting Teacher/Student Interactions in Reading Recovery from a Vygotskian Perspective, Winter 1993" (Carol A. Lyons). Section 4, Teaching for Diversity, contains the following articles: "Descubriendo La Lectura: A Reconstruction of Reading Recovery in Spanish, Winter 1994" (Kathleen McDonough); "Helping All Students Learn, Winter 1994" (Raquel C. Mireles); "Responding to Changing Demographics: Selecting Reading Recovery Books, Winter 1994" (Linda Garrett); "Text Selection for Limited English Proficient Students in Reading Recovery, Winter 1994" (Diana Geisler); and "'We Goed to Readin': Understanding How Children Learn Language, Fall 1995" (Nancy Anderson). Section 5, Teaching and Learning in Reading Recovery, contains the following articles: "A Closer Look at the Writing Component in the Reading Recovery Program, Autumn 1990" (Mary D. Fried); "Learning To Look at Print, Autumn 1992" (Steve Hansell); "Organizing Reading Recovery Lessons for Efficiency and Effectiveness, Autumn 1993" (Steve Hansell); "Dual Processing in Reading: Don't 'Get Your Mouth Ready' Yet, Autumn 1994" (Noel Jones); "Reading Recovery and Phonics: A Response for Parents, Autumn 1994" (Steve Hansell); "What Does Teaching at the Word Level Really Mean? Winter 1994" (Rose Mary Estice); "Doing It by the Book...or, Using the Language of the Guidebook in Our Teaching, Winter 1995" (Judith Neal); "Using Patterns of Responding to 'Follow the Child,' Spring 1997"

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(Rose Mary Estice); "Helping the Hard-To-Accelerate Child: Problem-Solving the More Difficult Cases, Fall 1997" (Noel Jones); and "Teaching for Strategies in Writing: Maintaining the Balance between Composing and Transcribing, Spring 1998" (Lee Skandalaris). (Each article contains references.) (NKA)

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ED 435 969

# The Best Of The Running Record

Revised Edition

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## Historical Perspective

## Research and Rationales

## Reading Recovery Training

## Teaching for Diversity

## Teaching and Learning in Reading Recovery

CS 013 746

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READING RECOVERY COUNCIL OF NORTH AMERICA

# The Best Of The Running Record √√√√

**Revised Edition**

The first volume of the *Best of the Running Record Newsletter* was produced in response to repeated requests for articles from past issues of *The Running Record* newsletter. The first volume has been out of print for some time. This revised edition includes selections from March 1989 through Spring 1998. Some articles from the first volume are repeated here because they continue to reflect our practice of Reading Recovery. Other articles from the first volume are not included in this volume because of changes in our practice or because they contain a substantial portion of references which no longer are available. The Reading Recovery Council of North America thanks the members of the Council's Training Advisory Committee who served as reviewers of these articles. Their assistance in determining the appropriateness of inclusion of all articles was invaluable.

The Council also thanks the authors whose articles appear in this Revised Edition. Their work continues to contribute to the success of Reading Recovery teachers who work everyday to ensure that children will be competent readers and writers by the end of first grade.

The articles in this revised edition are arranged by subject matter to assist the reader in finding articles which address a particular point of interest. Articles dated August 1994 and earlier appeared in the first volume of the *Best of the Running Record Newsletter*. These articles are copyrighted by The Ohio State University. Articles dated Winter 1995 to Spring 1998 are copyrighted by The Reading Recovery Council of North America.*

**Please note:**
The authors' titles and/or affiliations as shown are those held at the time of original publication and in many cases may have changed.

Reference is made in several articles to *ED*. The full title of the book is *The Early Detection of Reading Difficulties*, by Marie M. Clay, Third Edition, Heinemann Publishers, Portsmouth, New Hampshire, 1985. *Reading Recovery: A Guidebook for Training Teachers*, by Marie Clay, has replaced *ED*.

We hope these articles will prove useful to you and will add to your store of knowledge about Reading Recovery.

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www.readingrecovery.org

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## Section 1: Historical Perspective

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## *Why Reading Recovery Works*
## *May 1989*

*by Barbara Watson*
*National Director of Reading Recovery*
*New Zealand*

***The following is a summary of Watson's keynote address at the 1989 Reading Recovery Conference in Columbus, Ohio.***

Reading Recovery has spread around the world. It is currently operating in four countries: New Zealand, Australia, the United States and Canada. Expansion continues in many educational settings with thousands of children being reached each year.

To help understand why Reading Recovery works, Watson quoted from a soon-to-be published paper by Dr. Marie Clay. In essence, Clay states that Reading Recovery is a program of strategic instruction. Instruction is not on items (i.e., letters, words, letter sounds) but on learning HOW to use information.

Watson elaborated on this statement by explaining that children learn HOW to use information from written text, HOW to draw from their oral experience, and HOW to monitor and correct their own performances. Keeping meaning as the central focus, the teacher shares, facilitates and teaches the problem solving needed for any new or difficult aspects of the tasks.

As the child reads and writes text every day, the teacher helps the child make links and build understandings through these two reciprocal processes. Working on whole text reading and writing provides both enrichment and an economy of learning that makes Reading Recovery work. Teachers are constantly helping children develop their own ability to teach themselves how to learn more.

While there are many published details about Reading Recovery, they are neither prescriptive nor sufficient for implementing the program. Extensive teacher training is another key element that makes Reading Recovery work. Through training, teachers gain the knowledge necessary to observe the child, provide the instructional focus, and select from the "menu" of procedures outlined in *Early Detection*. Although a Reading Recovery lesson may seem informal and natural, the teacher makes independent decisions and designs an effective program for each child which may vary in content, pacing and amount of time in the program.

Teachers must understand what they are doing and why they are doing it as they observe and follow the child. Teachers cannot predetermine the lesson. Decisions are moment by moment and the teaching must be formulated during the lesson.

Choosing the appropriate book at the right time is one of the Reading Recovery teacher's most important decisions. Each teacher needs a wide variety of many different types of books to respond to the child's needs. Choosing the same sequence of books or books from the same series is not appropriate for Reading Recovery instruction. Sufficient money must be provided to purchase a suitable quantity and quality of little story books.

The first reading of the new book is important. It is a critical teaching time. The teacher supports, questions and teaches the child so that problems are solved and most of the story is read independently. Searching and checking are encouraged so that the child can be as independent as possible. Detailed records are kept and behaviors are analyzed in order to select the best texts and to help the child make giant leaps instead of step-by-step progress.

Quality decisions must be made based on evidence of the child's behavior gathered during the teaching session.

Teaching decisions in the writing portion of the lesson must also focus on strategic learning. Reading Recovery teachers must take care not to focus on learning words or writing words correctly but on HOW to learn to write words, HOW to analyze the sound sequence in words and to use letters to record sounds, and HOW to go from words that can be written to get to new words. Again, as in reading, the emphasis is on teaching independent problem solving.

Reading Recovery teachers must constantly ask themselves, "What is this child learning?" To answer this question teachers must observe the child as he/she reads and writes text. Teachers must sensitively follow, support, prompt, help and teach the child to move toward independent processing. Teachers must reinforce HOW the child got the response, not the correct response. Teachers must stimulate, foster, support, and reinforce the notion of "reading work."

It is important to understand that Reading Recovery works because of the quality of the teacher's decisions and the ongoing program demand for quality decisions. Program and teacher quality are fostered through continuing contact sessions. To promote accelerative teaching, teachers must continue to critically evaluate their own teaching and have opportunities for peer evaluation through live teaching sessions.

Reading Recovery is an educational system intervention program which needs many levels of support that allow for the continued refinement of the program in order to deliver a second chance for young children to learn to read and write. √√√

# *An Early Intervention to Prevent Literacy Learning Difficulties: What Is Possible? Spring 1994*

*by Marie M. Clay, Professor Emerita*
*University of Auckland, Auckland*
*New Zealand*

***Marie Clay received her Ph.D. from the University of Auckland in 1966 and was on the faculty there from 1960-1991.***

There are many theories about what causes difficulty in reading and writing, and there is scant research evidence of successful treatment. There have been debates and disagreements, recommended treatments that provide minimal improvements, few acknowledgments that different problems need different treatments, and thousands of stories about children who became adult illiterates.

I, however, did not ask questions about causes nor seek to compare one treatment with another; I sought a workable solution to be used by an education system. I wondered whether there was an optimum time in a child's education when some extra help could reduce the risk of literacy difficulties. What would be possible, and what would the something extra have to be?

About 1974, an accusation was directed at me by New Zealand teachers. Using my Observation Survey to monitor children's early progress, they watched some children becoming confused and failing to progress. Disturbed by what they saw, and unable to think how to overcome the difficulties they were identifying, they held me responsible for their plight and recommended that I search for a solution. About this time, overworked educational psychologists in New Zealand estimated that 60 percent of the children on their waiting lists had some literacy learning problems. If we could reduce the literacy problems, they could reduce those lists.

I began a two-year research and development project in 1976. Six teachers with special interests in literacy issues formed a research team, and each week one taught a child behind a one-way screen while the rest of the team talked about what was occurring. They discussed the child's difficulties and how the teacher responded, relating this to their pooled knowledge of theory and practical experience. The one-way screen was so useful that it became a technological requirement for training Reading Recovery teachers.

As a developmental and clinical psychologist, I was startled with the early results of the Reading Recovery program that we developed based on our observation and analysis. In 1978, some of the first teachers successfully brought the lowest achieving children in their school to average levels of performance in reading and writing in only 12 to 15 weeks! Most children continued effectively in their classroom programs after Reading Recovery was withdrawn; only a few needed to be referred for long-term help.

Then the snowball began to roll. One hundred teachers were trained in Auckland in 1979-1980, and the program spread slowly throughout New Zealand. New Zealand began the move to national coverage in 1983, reaching 21 percent of eligible children in 1988 and 24.5 percent in 1992. Teacher leaders were also trained in Auckland, some of them for Australia. Canberra, a federal territory of Australia, now has at least one Reading Recovery teacher in every school. A visit to New Zealand by three professors from The Ohio State University resulted in the first

course for the United States in 1984-85. The program has spread in the United States under the guidance of The Ohio State University. A Canadian training institute was formally opened in October, 1993. England's program is in its second pilot year.

Now the cutting edge of our growth is the delivery of the program in Spanish in the United States. Interest in adaptations to other languages has also been shown by literacy educators in Europe. It will take several years of development before we can work in other languages, as this involves much more than mere translation; the program must be redesigned to suit the characteristics of the new language.

Critics accuse us of "just good teaching," but there is no instant magic to be seen. There are three interlocking aspects of Reading Recovery. The public searches for a magic feature in what is done with the children; educators probe the model of teacher training for its secrets; but I am sure that dissemination and well-planned implementation are the real arbiters of success. In order to assure the highest level of quality for the program at large, well-trained teachers are guided by a network of teacher leaders, and in the United States a consortium of training programs allows the sharing of everything from research data to new policies. Reading Recovery professionals work very hard to develop clear communication about literacy learning, the wide range of individual differences faced by teachers, the dynamic changes needed as new knowledge becomes available, and the research needed to do justice to the complex questions posed about literacy.

Education is a product of society, and its values and practices are not amenable to identical replication in every country. Yet Reading Recovery has been able to adapt to different settings and populations, look fundamentally the same, and produce similar outcomes, if it is supported by a recognized training course. International exchanges are also becoming an important source of inservice training, and a means of escaping from the particulars of one country's education to discover what is general and what is necessarily specific for a given country.

Critics still question the possibility of getting rid of a high proportion of learning difficulties. What I would like to point out is this: Reading Recovery does not base its claims on an average score, which evens out wrinkles and hides the fact that some children are good and others are poor. There are stringent criteria to measure the outcome for every individual. When parents and teachers see individual children who appear highly unlikely to succeed but who achieve the desired outcome, their enthusiasm cannot be called hype, fashion, or blind belief. It is based on watching children become active participants in their education.

Children enter the program with almost no useful responses to literacy; they cannot be discontinued until they are independent readers and writers, able to then push the boundaries of their knowledge with a regular teacher.

Children are taken into the program without excluding anyone for any reason; the sole criterion is low literacy achievement. The program must adapt to the specific needs of a particular child.

Children come into the program from very different school curricula, since all methods have their failing readers. They are discontinued back into their classroom program able to be competent in that program, because they have been given control over their literacy and know how to problem-solve, whatever kind of instruction is given to them.

The program is introduced early, before there is a big gap to bridge. Slow-learning children learn at accelerated rates so that they can catch up with their classmates.

Reading Recovery is an approach to difficulty in reading and writing that not only leads to improved performance but does away with most of the problem. Furthermore, full imple-

mentation in a local, state, or national education system carries advantages over and above the progress of children and the professional growth of teachers. When high numbers of low achievers complete the program early in their schooling, and build on their previous gains without slipping back, then schools will have fewer children with literacy difficulties and therefore a reduced demand for services of specialists. A good quality program, backed by training, carefully implemented, and with adequate resources, can leave less than one percent of children of a given age with the need for continuing help. The projected savings on special education and individual failure can fund expansion. Society can even consider the possibility of reducing adult illiteracy to small numbers. √√√

***This article is reprinted from the Eighth Annual Charles A. Dana Awards 1993 Yearbook.***

## *Welcome Speech Fall 1995*

*by William D. Lynch*

***William Lynch is the founder of the William D. Lynch Foundation for Children. The Foundation underwrites research and funding for children's causes. Current major projects in San Diego County include a Reading Recovery Fund and an Even Start Family Literacy Project. Following are excerpts from Lynch's welcome speech to the Second International Reading Recovery Conference.***

It is a great pleasure to welcome all of you Indian Wells, California and to this Second International Reading Recovery Institute with representatives from all over the world. And, of course, a special welcome to Marie Clay and Barbara Watson.

It is therapeutic to be in such a large gathering of Marie Clay's disciples. This is especially true for me because I have been spending a great deal of time with politicians attempting to educate them about Reading Recovery .

Educating politicians is definitely a challenging task. In the beginning, with politicians, one must take a good deal of time "roaming around the known." One must "build on the smallest knowledge." Their "attention span is short" and "they fidget and squirm in their chairs." What keeps you going is "knowing how important it is that they must learn."

I have been asked to give my perspective on Reading Recovery and the challenges Reading Recovery faces today. Let me start by enumerating the beliefs of our foundation and how this has led to our support of Reading Recovery.

Six years ago we said in our mission statement that it is our unshakable conviction that the fulfillment of human potential is fundamentally dependent on the care and education of children. Every child saved becomes a positive force in the world and capable of caring for his or her own children. Every child lost becomes a negative force affecting future generations.

As we focused on how and why children fail, it became obvious that a good education is essential in the modern world and that reading is the foundation upon which all academic learning is built. It also became clear to us that an increasing number of children were failing as beginning readers.

Moreover, we discovered that $12 billion is being spent each year in the United States alone on remedial programs that are ineffective. Less than 3 percent of the students in these remedial programs ever reach the class average. Mostly what they learn is low self-esteem. We know that these students are the ones most likely to end up on welfare, or in jail, and that they perpetuate the cycle of failure.

It is against this bleak background that we measure the enormous value of Reading Recovery.

We believe we cannot overstate the value of an early intervention program that targets the lowest 20 percent of first graders and elevates 80 percent of them to the class average or above in 15 weeks of 30 minute daily sessions.

The value of Reading Recovery is even clearer when you discover that the program is cost effective. Full implementation of Reading Recovery in our public school systems would cost less than 30 percent of what we now spend on ineffective remedial programs. It is true that $2,500 per Reading Recovery student may be a 50 percent increase in cost for that particular student; however, full implementation of

Reading Recovery would cost only 2 percent of an elementary school budget—a budget that probably has 6 percent or more devoted to unsuccessful remediation.

This is how we see the importance of Reading Recovery. But what of its implementation? What is the strategic picture today for Reading Recovery?

The first thing to take note of is that Reading Recovery has expanded very rapidly. We believe it has now reached a critical stage. In the United States alone, there are now 10,000 Reading Recovery teachers. In California the program has grown from no Reading Recovery teachers five years ago to 1,600 today. Not unlike Patton marching across Western Europe, the forces of Reading Recovery have advanced very swiftly in their campaign to liberate the potential of children. One of the things Reading Recovery must do in the near future is consolidate its gains. Supply lines of information and support must be strengthened. Pontoon bridges must be replaced with permanent bridges. The priority must be to shore up existing sites.

Reading Recovery is now subject to more criticism than in the past. We might as well get used to it, because it will continue. And for an obvious reason: because Reading Recovery is now number 1. Reading Recovery is the team to beat. The bottom line is this: if a program can sell itself as better than Reading Recovery, it can get at the funding.

It is clear that we must improve our system of responding to critics. We must improve our communication with each other. We must improve our mutual support. We must expand our research. As you know, these are some of the reasons why the Reading Recovery Council of North America (RRCNA) was formed earlier this year.

I believe the RRCNA has come into existence at precisely the right time to help organize the responses to the various assaults on Reading Recovery and to help broaden and coordinate the necessary research base from which the program can be successfully defended.

Membership cost in the RRCNA is a very reasonable $40 per year. There are already 4,500 members. If you have not done so, please consider joining.

I would like to close my remarks today by telling you a story from my childhood about the Declaration of Independence and the man who wrote it. First, I should say that I had it easy in learning to read. My earliest memories are of being read to by my mother, my father, and my grandmother.

But my most vivid memories regarding reading are of my grandfather, William Jefferson Lynch. He would read only one thing to me, but he read it often. It was the Declaration of Independence which he loved. Before he would read the Declaration of Independence, my grandfather would always tell the same story. The story was a story his grandfather, Thomas Jefferson Lynch, had told him many times.

The story is about a day in 1824, when at age 6, my grandfather's grandfather actually met the man for whom he was named, the 81year-old Thomas Jefferson. My grandfather would end the story with the dramatic moment when Jefferson bent down and took the boy's hand—when the boy actually touched the hand that had penned the sacred words.

Then, after slowly reading the Declaration of Independence, my grandfather would finish by holding my hand in his and saying, "You are touching the hand that touched the hand that touched Thomas Jefferson."

I think it is fair to say my grandfather was a "whole language" sort of a guy.

I do know, he inspired in me an awe of the power of the written word—a visceral understanding that carefully chosen words of wisdom were the true power behind the Great American Revolution.

Today let those of us in this room look far

into the future where our grandchildren are telling their grandchildren the story of another revolution that took place two centuries after the American Revolution—a revolution founded on carefully chosen words of wisdom written by a woman in New Zealand, a revolution in how children are taught to read.

In my mind's eye, when this story is being told by our grandchildren to their grandchildren, it will end with these heartfelt words: "You are touching the hand that touched the hand that touched Marie Clay." √√√

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READING RECOVERY COUNCIL OF NORTH AMERICA

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Section 2: Research and Rationales

*Reading Recovery Swift, Effective in Reversing Reading Failure, MacArthur Study Finds* - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - 16
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By Noel Jones

# *Reading Recovery Swift, Effective in Reversing Reading Failure, MacArthur Study Finds Winter 1992*

*by Gay Su Pinnell*
*Associate Professor of Education and a Reading Recovery Trainer*
*The Ohio State University*

***Pinnell co-authored the study summarized in this article.***

Reading Recovery can make a swift and dramatic difference for children who risk illiteracy, reports a major new study completed in June, 1991, at The Ohio State University by Pinnell, Lyons, DeFord, Bryk, and Seltzer, 1991. Studies of Reading Recovery represent 16 years of research, beginning with Clay's six projects between 1976 and 1981 (see Clay, 1985, 1987), and also including Australian studies (Wheeler, 1984); the Ohio State studies beginning in 1984 (see Lyons, et al., 1990; DeFord, Lyons, & Pinnell, 1991; Pinnell, 1989); and program evaluation data, compiled from every site implementation of Reading Recovery, now in five countries. All of this research supports the program's effectiveness, but the latest study, sponsored by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, was designed to answer some specific questions that educators were asking about Reading Recovery.

The investigation was commissioned by the Chicago-based John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, a private philanthropy working in education reform. Researchers Carol Lyons, Diane DeFord, and Gay Su Pinnell undertook the investigation to address these practical questions:

Wouldn't any one-to-one program work as well, especially one more consistent with the skills taught in classroom programs?

Is the yearlong training program really necessary, or wouldn't a summer workshop do as well?

Can you do Reading Recovery in groups and achieve the same results?

To address these questions, the study tested the relative effectiveness of Reading Recovery's different techniques when used together and separately.

## Procedures

From 33 schools in ten Ohio school districts, a total of 324 first-graders, all of whom had tested as low readers, were randomly assigned to one of four intervention programs or a control group that represented traditional practice. The first intervention program was traditional Reading Recovery with a fully trained teacher. The second method, called "Reading Success," mimicked most aspects of Reading Recovery but used teachers trained in an abbreviated program. In the third group, which followed a plan called DISP, or "Direct Instructional Skills Plan," children were individually tutored by experienced teachers using a skills model. In the fourth, called "Reading-Writing Group," trained Reading Recovery teachers led group sessions instead of individual lessons. The fifth, the control group, relied on the skill drills and worksheets typical of federally-funded group remediation classes common in U.S. public schools (see table).

Each of the four interventions was compared with its own control group in one of the project schools. The lowest achieving first-grade students were randomly assigned either to a treatment or a control group. In this way the study controlled for the variation in students that exists across schools and school districts.

Remedial instruction lasted 70 days for each of the first four groups and throughout

| | Reading Recovery | Reading Success | Direct Introduction Skills Plan | Reading/Writing Group | Control Group |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Number of Lessons Analyzed | 18 | 18 | 18 | 13 | 12 |
| Setting | Individual | Individual | Individual | Small Group (4-6) | Small Group (4-6) |
| Allotted Time | 30 min. | 30 min. | 30 min. | 30-45 min. | 45 min. |
| Average Actual Time | 33 min. 21 sec. | 27 min. 23 sec. | 26 min. 49 sec. | 31 min. 43 sec. | 26 min. 34 sec. |
| Average % of Time Reading Text | 60.2% | 60.2% | 29.9% | 25.8% | 21.0% |
| Average % of Time Writing Text | 25.3% | 28.8% | .3% | 23.4% | 3.1% |
| Average % of Time: Other | 14.5% | 8.9% | 69.85 | 49.8% | 75.9% |
| Books Read by Children | 94 | 84 | 4 | 31 | 16 |
| Avg. no. Books per Lesson | 5.22 | 4.60 | .22 | 2.38 | 1.33 |
| Materials Used | little books, blank writing books markers & pencils magnetic letters counters | little books, blank writing books, markers & pencils magnetic letters counters | little books children's literature writing tablets word cards picture cards letter cards worksheets & workbooks | little books blank paper blank writing cards individual chalkboards | games, magic slates, books-basals, worksheets & workbooks, word cards; letter picture cards, magnetic letters, wall charts with words, scissors, crayons |

*Number of lessons analyzed. Each child in each treatment received approximately 70 lessons.

the entire school year for the control classes. At the end of their special classes, students took five tests to gauge their mastery of a wide range of literacy skills. To measure the lasting powers of the different forms of instruction, the students repeated some of the tests at the end of their first-grade year and again at the beginning of second grade.

## The Results

"Reading Recovery was the only group for which the mean treatment effect was significant on all four measures at the conclusion of the experiment," the study's final report concludes, "and was also the only treatment indicating lasting effects."

Specifically, the analysis showed that Reading Recovery children performed signifi-

cantly better than an equivalent control group and three other special treatments. Reading Recovery was the only group that was better on all tests, showing long-term effects in reading. At the end of 70 days of instruction when the treatment groups were disbanded and regular school services continued, Reading Recovery children were reading five levels ahead of children who received regular remedial reading lessons. Even though the control group continued to receive lessons for the rest of the year, Reading Recovery children were still three reading levels above the remedial group average when all children were tested the following Autumn. Two of the three special treatments, Reading Success and DISP, were four and five levels below the Reading Recovery group average after the 70-day treatment period and only 1.5 or less above their respective control groups. The third treatment, Reading-Writing group, which was taught by trained Reading Recovery teachers, was three levels below the Reading Recovery group. In the autumn, these special treatments were achieving about the same as the remedial reading group.

Students traditionally read three preprimer books and a primer-level book before tackling their "first-grade reader." The top reading group may read half of, or finish, the first reader; but the average reading group would more likely just be beginning this final book at the end of the first-grade reading program. The lowest reading group, on average, might still be in one of the preprimers. Reading Recovery children were reading the equivalent of the primer in February and were independently and comfortably reading the first-grade reader at the beginning of second grade. All other treatments and the remedial reading group were reading no higher than the third preprimer in February and were still reading, on an average, in the primer-level reader at the beginning of second grade. In the reading group scenario, Reading Recovery children would be considered to be achieving within average range, while the other children were still reading in the low group range. An interesting follow-up to this research project was found in the children who received Reading Recovery services after the experiment was over (in February, March, or April). These children were three reading levels ahead of children who received regular remedial reading when they were tested in the autumn. So they, too, were reading within the average as beginning second graders.

### Continuing Research

In addition to gaining quantitative information about student achievement, this large research project made it possible to look deeper into the processes involved in teaching and learning. Teachers in the study volunteered to be videotaped at intervals teaching the same student. These videotapes have been a rich source of qualitative data for continuing investigations of how teachers interact with children to support the development of reading and writing strategies. Lessons have been analyzed for content and time allocations, and teachers' own reflections on teaching have been probed to explore relationships between the teacher's knowledge base, teacher actions, and the development of students' understandings.

*Time and content.* A total of 79 videotaped lessons were analyzed for time and content. The results, presented in the table, provide interesting comparisons for the three individual programs and two group programs. Reading Recovery and Reading Success had the highest proportions of time spent directly on reading and writing. Time spent in the "other" category was largely talk about books, working on letter recognition, and writing for fluency. For DISP, the majority of time was spent not on reading or writing but on "other" activities, mostly exercises on listening, word recognition, and phonics worksheets, although reading to the child was included. The two group treatments,

Reading-Writing group (with a trained Reading Recovery teacher) and Control, provided another interesting contrast, with the former spending more time on reading and writing.

*Teacher-student interactions*. In-depth explorations of teacher-student interactions suggest that the most successful teachers tend to prompt the use of a balance of cueing systems, with the predominant focus on meaning (see Lyons, 1991; Lyons & White, 1990; DeFord, Tancock, & White, 1990). Instead of focusing mostly on one kind of cue (for example, sounding out) their prompting and reinforcing statements seem to support the child's use of the full range of information needed for reading: meaning, language syntax, and visual information (see Pinnell, Fried, Estice, & Powell, 1991). The most successful teachers were more likely to teach intensively and to make decisions and engage in the behaviors directed toward strategy use. Reading Recovery teachers were distinguished from partially trained teachers by subtle differences in the instructional programs they provided. Differences were not in the content or form of instruction, but in the opportunities provided the student to negotiate meaning through talk (Lyons, 1990).

## The Larger Meaning

Reading Recovery owes its success to the combination of four techniques that strengthen each other. A student and teacher meet privately for a daily half-hour of intense work. Children spend most of their lesson reading real books—not snippets from reading texts or worksheets—and writing sentences that they compose themselves. Teachers custom-tailor each student's lessons to build on the child's individual strengths, no matter how meager, showing them how to broaden those skills and use them to master others. Finally, Reading Recovery teachers learn the program's techniques not in a quick workshop but through a yearlong course of study. The course includes extensive practice-teaching, which is analyzed by experienced Reading Recovery teachers. Back in the schools, "teacher leaders" assist working Reading Recovery teachers to catch and correct weaknesses in their work and find new ways to be even more effective.

The results of this study make it clear that the success of Reading Recovery goes beyond the individual factor and the instructional emphasis factor. The time allocations for Reading Recovery and Reading Success were quite similar and they used the same framework for instruction; but as a group, the Reading Recovery teachers had higher student outcomes. It is clear that another factor made the difference: the intensity and effectiveness of the teaching within the Reading Recovery framework. The use of time, materials, and the one-to-one factor are necessary; however, the teacher's ability to (1) make spontaneous, effective decisions, (2) provide sustaining feedback, and (3) provide prompts that simplify the demands of the task are even more important. More research is needed to uncover the nature of the learning/teaching relationship, but the Reading Recovery training model and continuing contact among teachers may be critical factors in assuring student success. Reading Recovery emphasizes the role of the teacher as an informed, autonomous decision maker who is responsible for and controls both curriculum and instruction for each student. In order to provide opportunities for students to develop as independent readers and writers, the teacher must follow the student's thinking, recognize "teachable moments," and attend to the most memorable and powerful examples that will help learning to occur. The ability to understand and conceptualize learning and instruction at the cognitive and sociolinguistic levels take reflection, practice, and time. Reflective opportunities, over time, with knowledgeable peers are inherent in the Reading Recovery training program and the system of support that surrounds teachers who participate.

This study is a major step in confirming the previous findings—that, as an integrated system, Reading Recovery works. Individual instruction, instructional emphasis, and training all are factors in the success of the program; but information is needed beyond these surface factors. Solving the problems related to reading failure in the United States may ultimately depend on our willingness to look at programs in a way that uncovers the multiple, interacting factors that may mean success for high-risk students. √√√

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## *The Role of the University in Reading Recovery in North America*
## *Spring 1993*

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Reading Recovery is a school based teacher education program that expands teachers' expertise in helping young readers who are having difficulty in taking on literacy. Classes for teachers take place in local districts; discussions focus on the issues and concerns that arise from their daily teaching of children in their schools. What, then, is the role of the university in Reading Recovery?

When Reading Recovery was started in Ohio, it began as a collaborative venture by The Ohio State University, the Ohio Department of Education, and the Columbus Public Schools. The next year, the project was broadened to include many other school districts in the state as well as three other universities. Universities were instrumental in initiating Reading Recovery. Marie Clay conceptualized the university as having a central role in developing, sustaining, and constantly renewing Reading Recovery. Clay's own research, from which Reading Recovery was developed, was nurtured at the University of Auckland in New Zealand. Reflecting on the framework for training, Clay and Watson claimed that "without an effective training structure, most of the achievements of the program will not occur and it is the hardest to teach children who will lose out again" (Clay & Watson, 1990, p. 275).

It has been ten years since the beginning of Reading Recovery in North America, and universities have continued to play an important role. Now, over 50 universities are involved; some (18 of them) act as regional training sites for the preparation of teacher leaders. Others support teacher leaders by offering the Reading Recovery teacher course for graduate credit.

In this article we reexamine the role of the university in the Reading Recovery program. As two university professors involved in Reading Recovery, we will reflect on our own experiences, describe the preparation programs for teacher leaders and university trainers, talk about the multifaceted role played by universities, and discuss the university's responsibilities in Reading Recovery's future.

### The Goal of a University Based Preparation Program for Reading Recovery Personnel

The district based teacher leader is the key person in implementation of Reading Recovery. Clay has described the teacher leader's role as a "redirecting system" and emphasized its importance in Reading Recovery. Teacher leaders need a wide range of skills and a solid knowledge base that encompasses both research and practice. The university provides an essential base for preparing these key personnel.

Teacher leaders participate in a yearlong program of study that includes a clinical class, a theoretical course, and a practicum each semester. The teacher leader program of study is more than a "course." Their training year is considered a full-time job. They work daily with four children and participate in an array of field experiences which include leading in teacher classes and conducting school visits, in addition to their academic course work and clinical seminars that include the behind-the-glass experiences. In all of these experiences, they learn to puzzle out their own work with children but, just as important, think about

how they can work with and help teachers work more effectively with their children. As university trainers, our job is to design and implement the program of professional development for teacher leaders and to create and maintain the system that supports their work.

The preparation program for teacher leaders is not designed simply to pass on a technology; teacher leaders are decision makers who act from their own internalized theories. The goal of their professional development experience at a university is to help them develop a knowledge base for designing preparation programs for the teachers in their areas. They know how to make decisions about what they do and when to be flexible in responding to the individuals in their classes and to local needs without compromising the quality of the program. They need a system that allows them to continue to learn from their practice and respond to new challenges and issues that arise in local districts. Teacher leaders' decisions are critical to maintaining the quality of Reading Recovery. According to Clay, the role of teacher leaders is to "act as advocates for whatever cannot be compromised in the interests of effective results" (Clay, 1987, p. 47)

At each site, teacher leaders are the local implementation experts who guide school personnel in important decisions such as planning facilities; selecting teachers; and arranging schedules for assessment training, weekly classes, and continuing contact sessions. Teacher leaders use their understandings of the underlying rationales for every aspect of the training to negotiate these decisions within their local context.

## The Preparation of Teacher Leaders and University Trainers

From the beginning of their training teacher leaders must think at two levels about their teaching of children and also their teaching of adults. In our own preparation as university trainers, we found that we had to keep three different kinds of preparation in mind: the teaching of children, how teachers are prepared, and the course of study for Reading Recovery teacher leaders.

**Teaching children.** University professors begin teaching children during their training year and continue their practice as long as they are involved in Reading Recovery. Teaching children is pivotal to everything else the university professor does. Our goal is to become expert in our teaching of children and to learn to use this teaching to inform our work in helping teachers and teacher leaders. Teaching children challenges our theoretical assumptions and helps to keep us fresh and flexible in examining new paradigms. Our teaching generates questions that spark inquiry in the teacher leader class. As teachers of children, we recognize that our own students—teachers and teacher leaders—may surpass us. Teaching children makes a profound difference in the quality of teaching we offer to teacher leaders; it keeps the teacher leader course from becoming mechanical practice or an academic exercise. Sometimes, university professors read research and then advise teachers without grounding themselves in practice. Teaching children is a laboratory that provides that grounding and makes the difference between the typical university professor role and the Reading Recovery trainer's role and experience.

**Clinical course and practicum.** The clinical course helps prospective teacher leaders and trainers learn to teach children using Reading Recovery procedures. We also construct theoretical explanations concerning the reading and writing behaviors of children. As university teacher educators, we find the clinical class has a powerful impact on our understanding of how adults learn. We begin to think differently about teacher education curricula as we analyze what is going on in the teacher leader class and teacher classes. The practicum extends participants' knowledge of the practical aspects of the program. In addi-

tion to working with experienced teacher leaders in teacher classes, university trainers travel to several different sites within and outside of the state in which they are being trained, and they attend meetings for administrators, state agency personnel, and site coordinators as well as professional development meetings for teacher leaders.

**Theoretical seminar.** The purpose of the theoretical seminar is to enable the participants to understand the theoretical base for Reading Recovery and to extend their understandings by examining current research and applications and putting them into practice. Issues across several strands of content are explored; for example, cognition and learning, language systems and language learning, social and cultural influences on literacy learning, the development of literacy connections between reading and writing, comprehension, assessment, and reading difficulties. All participants take oral and written exams in order to increase their facility and flexibility in expressing concepts. University trainers participate fully in the theoretical class, assist in planning and evaluation, and act as resources for the group. Trainers use their research skills throughout the course, and they take an additional seminar with the professor for their project.

## Responsibilities of the University Site

*[Editor's Note: In 1998, university training programs for teachers leaders are designated as university training centers. The term "site" now refers to teacher training sites at the school district or consortium level.]*

**Communication and coordination.** Beyond providing training programs, universities support Reading Recovery in several important ways. Communication and coordination take place within a region or state as well as among sites throughout North America and the world. University personnel take on the responsibility for these communication efforts. Typically, the university training site where teacher leaders were originally prepared serves as a home base for their continuing contact; however, the site also includes teacher leaders who move into the area. The university establishes new sites, a process that involves considerable communication prior to the training of a teacher leader as well as during the training year. Universities make contracts with new sites that outline the requirements for a quality program in Reading Recovery. Reading Recovery is a university credit course taught by a teacher leader who is affiliated with the university site. The academic course helps to ensure the quality of the training and serves to reinforce the university/school district relationships.

University personnel advocate for the program within the university system. In fact, Reading Recovery represents an anomaly in the typical university system. Trainers communicate with other faculty members and with the university administration. For example, in typical university classes, students complete the course and then go out to apply their work to practice. University professors do not usually know how that transition occurs or the outcomes for the children taught by teacher education students. University trainers in Reading Recovery observe and support these transitions through site visits; annual site reports; and such ongoing Reading Recovery professional development activities as state and regional meetings, an annual conference and the teacher leader institute. In Reading Recovery, we remain connected to our students and we assess the results of what we do in light of what they do. So, each university trainer is in contact with an ever increasing number of teacher leaders, all of whom are in contact with an ever increasing number of teachers and children.

New structures for teacher education are being developed to accommodate and nurture Reading Recovery within higher education. For example, Reading Recovery offers challenges to

improve teacher education. It also offers a rich arena for research on early literacy learning and on teacher education. Locating Reading Recovery within the university may make it possible to influence the academic community and be part of the ongoing creation of new knowledge. It gives it visibility within this community and has an impact on the larger field. For example, at the University of Illinois, the Year Long Project, an alternative field-based program for elementary pre-service teachers, was influenced by observation of Reading Recovery. At Ohio State, teacher study groups have extended their learning by meeting with faculty members over the period of one or two years to enhance their observational skills and develop new ways of working with young children in classroom settings. Reading Recovery appears frequently in the professional literature and is sometimes used as a comparative standard for the new programs developed for at-risk children.

**Research.** One of the roles of the university trainer is to collect and analyze data from sites within the region and to enable individual sites to contribute to, and benefit from, the national data base, located at The Ohio State University. Trainers are also expected to pursue their own strands of research. For many of us, Reading Recovery has become the focus of our efforts. All of these efforts contribute to our knowledge about learning and ultimately help us in refining our work in Reading Recovery. For example, Billie Askew and Dianne Frasier (Texas Woman's University) have explored comprehension processes among Reading Recovery children. Jan Gaffney has investigated family systems and conducted studies of teacher education. Carol Lyons (The Ohio State University) has investigated the progress of children designated as learning disabled and has also looked at teacher cognition. Diane DeFord (The Ohio State University) has examined the reciprocity between reading and writing early on in the child's program.

**Ongoing professional development of teacher leaders.** The university trainer is responsible for maintaining a connection with the teacher training sites in his/her area. Teacher leaders are linked with one another and take in new members yearly. This requires an organizing body to convene the group. An umbrella entity, such as a university, can perform this convening role. School districts typically concentrate on their local affairs and usually do not have the mechanisms in place to support the efforts needed to work across sites. Regional connections help to strengthen the program as a whole because teacher leaders learn to know and support each other and to create their own learning culture as they meet together.

Reading Recovery personnel are prepared to respond to an ever-evolving base of theoretical information. They examine and help research to see how it contributes to our theoretical understandings or challenges our current assumptions and practices. The university can help by disseminating new information, both from the research conducted within Reading Recovery and from the general research community. Typically, university trainers and teacher leaders share new and important articles with each other. Teacher leaders and teachers often conduct their own research using the university as a resource. Sometimes, teacher leaders meet with the trainer. The school/university connection makes it possible for the teacher leaders to access the resources they need. This school/university connection helps to keep Reading Recovery fresh and self-renewing. The university trainer's role is to support the teacher leader in every aspect of the job; while teacher leaders are independent professionals, they still need a support system. The university professor's job is either to provide this support personally or to create an arena that stimulates and fosters it.

University trainers make site visits during the field year (i.e., the second year of training).

The activities that comprise a visit range from observation of the teacher leader teaching children to conducting school visits, to working in teacher classes, to meetings with administrators. Even after the field year, such visits typically take place as teacher leaders work to meet new challenges.

Part of the networking role of the university trainer is to foster an exchange of information among site coordinators. University trainers listen to site coordinators' concerns from the perspective of activity in the region and in the United States This information is critical in making decisions for the further development and expansion of Reading Recovery nationally.

## Networking Across University Sites

Reading Recovery does not exist as an isolated program in a district, state or region. Each Reading Recovery site is connected to the whole. University trainers help to maintain connections across sites, both in the United States and internationally.

**Meetings and communication.** Trainers meet with each other at least three times per year to discuss issues related to the preparation of teacher leaders and to program development. They also structure sessions for their own professional development. They maintain frequent contact with each other by telephone and other means in order to assure quality and consistency across teacher leader training sites. University trainers make the commitment to make at least one colleague visit every year to increase their skills and their knowledge of how other programs operate.

**Yearly Teacher Leader Institute.** Based on input from teacher leaders, a committee of trainers plans, organizes and provides a program for the annual teacher leader institute. In this institute, teacher leaders and trainers have a chance to meet with each other in ways that extend their understandings of theoretical and practical matters.

## Reflections

It is an interesting exercise to think about one's role; and with that, of course, comes an awareness of responsibilities. We believe that our work as directors of university sites is an important one; what makes it important is the way it supports the work of teacher leaders at field sites. We do what they would find too time-consuming and distracting to do as they are concerned with the critical decisions related to making Reading Recovery successful in local areas. After all, that is where Reading Recovery must succeed again and again and again if we are to have an impact on the literacy education of the children that concern us. We perform convening and communication functions that local teacher leaders would find difficult or distracting.

We have gained from this examination of our own work. In future issues of the Running Record, we would like to hear from teachers, site coordinators, and teacher leaders about their perceptions of their roles. And, we invite letters regarding how we, as university trainers, can do our job better. √√√

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## *Rationale for Teaching at Least Four Reading Recovery Children Spring 1997*

*by Noel Jones*
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The Guidelines and Standards of the Reading Recovery Council of North America (RRCNA) require that a Reading Recovery teacher "teach at least four children individually for 30 minutes daily in a school setting" (RRCNA, 1993, pg. 3-4). The intention is that four children per day will be taught by each teacher in training and that a minimum of four children per day will be taught by each experienced teacher. Most teachers work with four children during a period of two to two and a half hours and spend the rest of their day in other education-related assignments. When a greater block of time is dedicated to Reading Recovery (e.g., three hours), the expectation is that teachers teach more than the minimum of four children.

This guideline requiring teachers to teach a minimum of four children daily may be perceived as constrictive or arbitrary. Therefore it is important to communicate the rationale for this guideline to administrators and other educators so that they can better serve the intended goals of Reading Recovery, and so they might understand when exemptions to the guideline are appropriate.

The requirement to teach a minimum of four children was established because of its importance to (a) Reading Recovery teacher training and professional development, and (b) the purposes of Reading Recovery as a system intervention to reduce reading failure and to the maintenance of program integrity. These factors will be discussed in that order.

### Training and Professional Development

Marie Clay has stated in the Canadian Reading Recovery Newsletter the importance to teacher professional development of maintaining a case load of at least four students during the training year. I quote from her statement:

> For teachers in training it is unsatisfactory and unacceptable to teach fewer than four children daily. Teachers need to reach a variety of children with a variety of different problems in their first year while in training. When they take four at a time, they will probably take eight children into the programme during the year. This is a minimum to ensure that they are facing problems of very challenging and different kinds. They need this varied experience at the time their understandings of the programme are in formation.
>
> Teachers also need to experience the way in which children can take different routes to the common outcome and how different in type and length their programmes must be. With only two children it is highly likely that the teacher will assume she can deliver a standard programme to Reading Recovery children, and not develop the repertoire of alternative teaching approaches that she needs, for training is a critical time when the teacher is putting aside her old teaching pattern and taking aboard new ones. Because this is such an important issue, it has been discussed in several reports to districts in connection with implementing a quality programme.
>
> The Guidelines and Principles for Reading Recovery in Canada [and in North America] require that a teacher in training must teach 'four children individually for 30 minutes daily in a school setting.' This expresses in a shorthand form the accepted practice across the world but assumes that these children will be discontinued and that four others will be taken into the programme in that same training year (Canadian Reading Recovery Newsletter, 1995).

## System Implementation and Program Integrity

The rationale for maintaining a minimum case load of at least four children beyond the training year involves issues of implementation and program integrity.

According to Clay (1994), "The purpose of Reading Recovery is to significantly reduce reading failure within a school system." Put another way, the purpose of the program is to reduce dramatically the lowest-achieving end of the distribution of abilities so that very few children advance to the next grade reading below-grade level expectations. The theory and teaching procedures developed by Clay and other Reading Recovery personnel (Clay 1991, 1993a, 1993b) make it possible for the lowest achieving first grade children to accelerate their learning. However, in order to realize the possibility of significantly reducing the number of problem readers in a school system, the district should provide sufficient Reading Recovery service so that the program is available to most of the lowest-achieving children in the cohort which passes through the first grade during any single year.

What constitutes 'sufficient service' within a school will vary according to the school population and the quality of educational experiences available both before and after school entrance. Most frequently it is suggested that Reading Recovery intervention is needed by the lowest 15 to 20 percent of the first grade population. A rule-of-thumb for calculating 15 to 20 percent coverage is to provide one person teaching Reading Recovery for half a day for every two first grade classrooms (or one full-time Reading Recovery position for every four classrooms or 90 to 100 first grade children). In many schools, the percentage of children at risk of failure is higher than 20%. In such schools, Reading Recovery coverage may need to be higher, but there will also be a need to strengthen educational support for children's learning at all levels, including classroom, kindergarten and pre-school programs, and the family.

Administrators are urged to work towards the goal of full implementation within their systems; for example, the expectation that they will continue to offer training and expand the program is mentioned in the assurances that are part of the site application. However, the actual percentage of all school children helped by an early intervention such as Reading Recovery will depend upon the resources available.

Less than full implementation seriously jeopardizes the intent of the program. Without full implementation, a significant number of children who need intervention will pass to the next grade. Teachers in the upper grade levels will find they still have a significant number of children who cannot read well enough to profit from classroom instruction. Thus there will be a continued demand to commit additional resources for remediation services.

Sometimes administrators find it hard to resist pressure from teachers at higher grades who find it difficult to cope with reduced support for their low-achieving students. Even if Reading Recovery were fully implemented in a system within a single year, problem readers will still be present in the upper grades during the early years of implementation. There is a temptation to reduce the case load of Reading Recovery teachers to two or three children daily in individual lessons so that their time might be spent remediating upper-level problem readers. However, this approach is shortsighted. If it results in insufficient coverage for at-risk children in the first grade cohort, the cycle of a significant number of non-readers will continue to progress through the system. Granting exemptions to the guideline for a minimum case load of four children will tend to defeat the aim of the program, which is to reduce reading failure within the system.

However, it is important to recognize that Reading Recovery children should be continu-

ally monitored, and sometimes it may be necessary to provide some support to children who successfully discontinued from Reading Recovery in Grade One as well as some who do not discontinue. Clay (1993b) reminds us that, "Although Reading Recovery children perform well in their classes some of them remain at-risk children, easily thrown by life circumstances or poor learning experiences. A refresher course of individual instruction for a short period should be most helpful for a 'recovered' child who has begun to slip behind his classmates" (p. 59). Thus it *will* be important to continue to devote some time to the support of children falling into difficulty in upper grades because of "life circumstances." Achieving a proper balance between the early intervention program provided by Reading Recovery, support and strengthening of kindergarten and primary grade classrooms, and limited-time support for readers as they progress through the grades requires local problem-solving with thoughtful input from the Reading Recovery teacher(s), teacher leader(s), and university trainer in conjunction with the school staff and administrator.

In cases where a school has reached full implementation, it becomes possible to use a Reading Recovery teacher in more flexible ways provided the needs of the first grade cohort are fully met. Therefore, exemptions have been granted for requests that clearly indicate the school is fully implemented and the program is addressing the avowed aim of Reading Recovery to reduce reading failure within the system.

The position of the Guidelines and Standards Committee [of the Reading Recovery Council of North America] is to grant exemptions in cases where the school system has made clear they are serving the intent of the program by providing Reading Recovery intervention to <u>all</u> at-risk first graders who need this service, <u>and</u> where a reduced case load for one or more teachers does not jeopardize this intent, <u>and</u> where the teacher(s) in question have the confidence of the teacher leader that their teaching reflects a clear understanding of the need to accommodate to each child's pattern of strengths and needs. In cases that are not clear, the applicant may be asked to submit further clarifying information.

Some requests may come from districts that seek to use Reading Recovery to serve different or additional purposes; for example, some districts wish to have teachers trained in Reading Recovery just so their new understanding will make them better classroom teachers. These alternative purposes may be well intended; however, if they jeopardize the stated aim of significantly reducing reading failure within the system, these districts will most likely not achieve results consistent with Reading Recovery's claims and continuing record of success. Reading Recovery results are being carefully scrutinized by educators and researchers around the world who wish to know whether districts <u>can</u> realize the potential of this intervention and at what cost. Using the name Reading Recovery to serve alternative purposes tends to obscure the aims and diminish the quality and effectiveness of the program. √√√

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READING RECOVERY COUNCIL OF NORTH AMERICA

# The Best Of The Running Record √√√√

Revised Edition

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by Carol A. Lyons

# *Reading Recovery Teachers as Lifelong Learners: Teachers in Transition Autumn 1991*

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Some time ago, I heard Marie Clay present a paper for the Eminent Scholar Program at The Ohio State University. In her discussion of teachers and teaching Clay said she felt that a teacher must hold an incomplete theory. This idea puzzled me as I felt a teacher needed to hold a well-defined theory. This thought prompted me to explore the role of the teacher as a professional learner and to look at Reading Recovery training as a teacher-education model.

Teaching is complex in that the what, how, and who we are teaching are ever shifting. Because teaching is complex and requires an ever-shifting stance relative to what we observe and how we teach, we must be reflective in our teaching and become life-long learners. "Holding an incomplete theory" might be another way of stating this concept.

When I first read Clay's book *Reading: The Patterning of Complex Behavior* (1979), I was somewhat put off by the emphasis on cognitive psychology and terms like "confusion." My theoretical background differed from Clay's; consequently, in 1981, I put her book away on my shelf. In 1985, I was asked to observe a Reading Recovery lesson. I was fascinated as I observed the lesson, but I was still brought up short by a few things I didn't like. My curiosity overcame my disagreement with aspects of the program, and I became actively involved in learning about Reading Recovery. From the beginning, I found it easy to use the procedures I agreed with, and I tried to find ways around using those I disagreed with. I began to put my disagreements on hold to try to see the sense and effects of particular practices with particular children.

Six years of teaching in Reading Recovery have lead me to reconsider my beliefs in light of what I see children and teachers (myself included) doing. I have filled out my belief system so that my knowledge base, although it is still incomplete, is stronger for many aspects of early literacy learning. I had to take off my "theoretical high heels," so to speak, and replace them with walking shoes that are more comfortable for a long journey.

I use this personal example as a way to illustrate changes teachers may need to take on as they begin their rigorous and sometimes frustrating journey through their first year of Reading Recovery training. This excerpt from a study group paper from the 1991 Teacher Leader Institute (Smith-Burke, Jones, Baird, DeCou-Johnson, et al., 1991) also helps illustrate the concept of teachers in transition as they enter Reading Recovery training:

> Many teachers enter the program with a "transmission" model of learning. In other words, these teachers assume that they will learn if they are told what to do. Knowledge is treated as absolute and justified on the basis of the authority of its source; it is not reasoned through based on evidence in a particular situation.
>
> In contrast, the goal of Reading Recovery training ... is the development of teachers who are independent learners and have a constructive or a transactive model of learning. They reflect on their practice and problem solve. They each see themselves as constructors of their own knowledge and learning through self-initiated inquiry, hypothesis formation, planned and systematic practice, observation, dia-

logue and interaction with others, and articulation and re-formulation of ideas. Teachers who are independent learners view knowledge as incomplete and tentative, draw on conceptual frameworks from a broad range of disciplines, question, and strive for consistency in the interpretation and application of ideas.

## Accomplishing the Goal of Reading Recovery Training

The goal of Reading Recovery training is not easily accomplished. Is there even one teacher among all of us who didn't want to cry out during the early class session, "Just tell me what to do! Don't ask me what I think!"? Shelli Morgenstern has expressed her frustration about learning and making transitions: "I have learned that it is much easier to change one's attitudes as a teacher than it is to eliminate habituated behaviors" (Morgenstern, 1991).

Current research on teacher change suggests that collaboration is an important aspect of the change process. In particular, it is the "talking to learn" that helps teacher learning to occur (Smith-Burke, et al.). Talking openly about your teaching to your colleagues helps you to understand more about what you do and think. Traditionally, one side of teaching has remained closed to teachers as professionals, and that is peer feedback. Too often we teach behind closed doors, in the absence of talk or reflection.

As we know, this is not the case, either in the Reading Recovery training year or in subsequent years of colleague visits and continuing contact sessions. Schon talks about "reflection-in-action," or thinking about what you are doing while you are doing it. He states, "Most often this occurs in situations of uncertainty, uniqueness and conflict" (Schon, 1987). All who have taught behind the glass for the first time would agree that the situation is unique and causes strong feelings of uncertainty. Some might even say that the experience leads to an inner conflict whether to run out of the door or stay and tough it out. It does not take many sessions for the teachers in Reading Recovery training to meld together as a group that is comfortable with this formerly unique situation. Teachers in training are able to provide each other with a high level of reflection-in-action.

## Training Activities

In Reading Recovery, a teacher and a child work together on one side of a one-way mirror while teacher colleagues, guided by an experienced teacher leader, observe and discuss the lesson on the other side. The discussion centers on the responses of the child, on the interaction between teacher and child, and on the theoretical bases of Reading Recovery as they relate to the lesson in action.

Immediately after two such lessons, the teachers who taught them meet with the colleague group, again with the guidance of the teacher leader, to discuss both lessons. The purpose of these discussions both during and after the lessons is sometimes misunderstood. The primary function of the discussions is not to evaluate the teacher or to critique the lesson. The purpose is for the group to learn by talking about their expectations and beliefs in relation to their observations and analysis of the common lessons they have watched together. This discussion of the act of teaching is challenging and theoretical while also practical and supportive. Coaching and feedback to the two teachers occurs more as a byproduct of the group-level discussion. Reflecting and talking about one's practices and ideas is important to learning and teaching. In his research on learning Carol Rogers comments on his own learning: "I find that another way of learning for me is to state my own uncertainties, to try to clarify my puzzlement, and thus get close to the meaning that my experience actually seems to have" (Rogers, 1969, p. 277).

As with Rogers, it is basic to Reading Recovery that theory and knowledge are

grounded in experience. Clay insists that Reading Recovery training at all levels includes ongoing work with children. This principle implies that teachers, from elementary school through the university level, must learn to be attentive, accurate observers of children. And they must also learn to compare and/or challenge existing perceptions, ideas, or beliefs on the basis of what they or others are observing as they teach children (Smith-Burke, et al.). I offer again this important summary of the Reading Recovery training model from a document written by the teacher-leader study group:

> Meanings of events and of utterances can be constructed, enhanced and/or discovered through articulation, sharing and negotiating with others. As teachers share their perceptions and impressions of what they see with others, their ability to observe improves. As they share inferences about children's and/or teacher's intentions, responses and strategies in lessons behind the glass and interpretations of passages they have read in the text, they discover or create meaning that might have escaped them individually.
>
> In order for this to occur some teachers need to change prior attitudes and habits that inhibit collaborative learning. Both as contributors and as responders they need to leave behind old notions that any comment or observation is right or wrong. They need to understand that ideas can by offered not only as contradictions but also as qualifications, expansions or clarifications of meaning. Each Reading Recovery teacher must be an active participant and an active learner in the process (Smith-Burke et aL).

## Learning from the Children

Reflecting about the children we are teaching is another way to extend our understanding of teaching as well as learning. Duckworth describes learning as messy (1987) and suggests that a planned program of observing and working one-on-one with children is critical to a teacher's understanding of learning. Reading Recovery fulfills this critical requirement. In the training year teachers immediately begin to put their new learning into action by teaching four different students in one-on-one lessons.

Early in their training many teachers have difficulty letting go of their previous concepts and proceeding to a theory of learning and teaching that will enable them to "build on the child's strengths, observe, and follow the child." However, the practical aspects of working one-to-one with four different children soon put new understandings into action. As Duckworth (1987, p. 69) again recommends, "We must come to accept surprise, puzzlement, excitement, patience, caution, honest attempts and wrong outcomes as legitimate and important elements of learning." Following the child instead of a preset program also establishes the virtue, on our part, of not knowing. This concept forces us to suspend our beliefs and establishes the expectation to learn from careful observation of our children.

The group summary report compares how Reading Recovery children and teachers learn. Smith-Burke et al. write:

> Just as the young children who are learning to read make errors, receive feedback from the text or their teachers, and revise their reading strategies, so teachers learn through a process of approximation in Reading Recovery. They receive feedback from the children they teach and also from the discussions in front of the glass, after the lessons, and during field visits from colleagues and the teacher leader. Teachers need to be allowed to approximate and make errors, then reflect on their teaching, and modify what they find unsuccessful (Smith-Burke, et al., 1991).

During the course of the training the focus and the role of the teacher leader changes as the teachers grow in their experience and understandings. In the beginning the teacher leader may often need to present, clarify and demonstrate procedures using examples from their background of experience and theoretical understandings. As the teachers begin to take on the theory and understandings, the teacher leader works with the teachers in a collaborative manner, using questions to stimulate alternative ideas, independent problem solving, and

discoveries.

### The Revolution of Change

Finally, we should understand that the observing, analyzing, reflecting and "talking-to-learn" processes are not easy to incorporate into our beliefs. In his discussion of learning, Schon suggests that as practical innovation begins to bring about shifts in basic belief systems, reflection and articulation bring to the surface beliefs and evidence, so that more reflection creates a kind of revolution of change (Schon, 1991).

In three studies currently underway (Pinnell & McCarrier, 1989; Lyons, 1991; Button in progress), teachers and researchers working together have documented that this process takes a minimum of two years, and possibly more. When the required shifts in learning are based upon a different theoretical position, a complex array of support systems must exist, including time, reflective teaching, open-ended feedback and coaching.

The support systems needed for change are not often viable in today's notion of schooling. Three-day inservices, motivational speakers, the purchase of hardware and software—all feed into society's expectation for quick fixes.

Reading Recovery is one exception. The program provides both formal and informal support for change and ongoing learning. After teachers finish their training year, continuing contact sessions are scheduled periodically during the school year. The teachers come together to discuss behind-the-glass lessons and participate in in-depth problem solving. Trained teachers continue to increase their levels of expertise but still encounter a wide variety of students who are difficult to teach. The role of the teacher leader now includes more consultation as the teachers work together on challenging problems.

Trained teachers also collaborate with each other through colleague visits as teachers take responsibility for their own learning and ongoing theory building. Many teachers have established self and group study collaborations. Teachers often audiotape or videotape a lesson for thorough self-analysis. Before- or after-school study groups have been organized by teachers. We reported in a previous edition about the "Get Your Mouth Ready" group, which meets once a week for breakfast, support and Reading Recovery problem solving.

The long-term support and the "talking to learn" process are critical factors in successful transitions, but the bottom line is learning within the individual. As Rogers states, "I have come to feel that the only learning which significantly influences behavior is self-directed, self-appropriated learning" (Rogers, 1969, p. 277). It is a policy of Reading Recovery that the teachers who receive the training are volunteers. During the training the teachers are guided and encouraged to try on behaviors of a new theory and to observe the results with children (Dobbins, 1991). Changes in beliefs are not easy to achieve. Operating with a theory that is incomplete puts continued demands on the teacher to be an expert observer of children and a willing participant in critical analysis of self and others. A final quote written by a teacher in the spring of her training year captures the feelings of those who are successful in making the transition (Zimmaro, 1991): "I still feel on unsteady ground much of the time, though not for such long stretches or as unsteady as I felt the first few months. I hope the learning will never end."

I hope, too, the learning will never end. There is excitement in never quite knowing what is around the corner to be discovered on another day. √√√

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# *Interpreting Teacher/Student Interactions in Reading Recovery from a Vygotskian Perspective Winter 1993*

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Lev Vygotsky, a Russian educator and psychologist who lived from 1896 to 1934, developed a theory of learning that is exerting a profound influence on psychology and education today. One reason for this renewed interest in Vygotsky's ideas may be that he has provided an analytical way of thinking about learning, a complex phenomenon that is often hard to understand and describe. A second reason may be that his theories have helped educators think about the importance of the teacher's role in the process.

In a recent article, Marie Clay and Courtney Cazden (1990) described Reading Recovery lessons from a Vygotskian perspective.

The metaphorical term "scaffold," though never used by Vygotsky, has come to be used for interactional support, often in the form of adult-child dialogue, that is structured by the adult to maximize the growth of the child's intra-psychological functioning. In their shared activity, the teacher is interacting with unseen processes — the in-the-head strategies used by the child to produce the overt responses of writing and oral reading. For one child, the Reading Recovery Program as a whole is such a scaffold. On a micro level, we have seen many examples of the child functioning independently, in both reading and writing, where earlier collaboration between teacher and child was necessary (p. 219).

Some of you may be asking yourself, "What do they mean by intra-psychological functioning?" "How can I structure a conversation during the lesson to maximize the growth of my student's intra-psychological functioning?" In order to answer these important questions, it is necessary to explore two Vygotskian theoretical principles of learning and teaching: the theory of cognitive development and the zone of proximal development.

## The Theory of Cognitive Development

Vygotsky (1978) proposed that cognitive development is a transformation of basic biologically determined generic processes into more complex mental functions such as selective attention and problem solving — the functions that define the human species. Thus every child is endowed by nature with the capacity to perceive, attend and remember. These basic processes, however, are substantially transformed to more complex cognitive processes as the child begins to control and regulate his or her own behaviors. This capacity to regulate behavior is a social process mediated by language.

Vygotsky's view of how children develop complex thinking and reasoning ability is supported in language research which suggests that children understand more than they can produce and through interaction with a parent, build systems of understanding and strategies for generating further learning (Cazden, 1988; Lindfors, 1987). The Reading Recovery lesson is a shared activity throughout which the teacher and child converse. Through this encounter, inherent in the lesson, the child learns strategies for independent problem solving to extend his or her knowledge (in press, Lyons, Pinnell & DeFord).

The conditions for learning to talk are not, of course, the same as learning to read and write, but the principles that they exemplify are similar. In each instance, a shared activity and conversation with a more knowledgeable other provide the supportive context through which children develop new understandings.

Bruner described Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development as a theory of instruction because of the "unique form of cooperation between the child and adult that is the central element of the educational process" (Bruner, 1987, p. 169). This theory of instruction may be useful to describe children's progress throughout Reading Recovery. Teacher and student collaboration, supported by language around a specific learning activity, allows the child to "construct some inner generating system, which will initiate and manage learning of this kind independently on future occasions" (Clay, 1991, p.42).

### Zone of Proximal Development

A key concept in Vygotsky's theory of instruction is the zone of proximal development. The zone of proximal development (ZPD) is defined as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). In other words, we could think of the ZPD as the distance between the child's individual capacity — what he or she can do without help (zone of actual development) — and the capacity to perform with support of a teacher. Vygotsky proposed that an individual's ability to learn how to regulate his or her own behavior is for the most part a language process that develops from social interaction within the ZPD. He argued that the essential feature of learning is that it creates the ZPD and thereby awakens a variety of internal cognitive processes when the individual is interacting with people in his or her environment or in cooperation with peers. These higher mental functions first appear on the social level, between people (intercognitive) and later on the individual level, inside the learner (intracognitive). Once the processes are internalized, they become part of the learner's independent developmental achievement.

Thus Vygotsky viewed thinking and the development of problem-solving skills as a characteristic not of the child only but of the child in social activities and conversations with others. He also emphasized the relationship between learning and the social organization of instruction and the important role the teacher plays in this organization. An adaptation of Tharp and Gallimore's (1988) model of progression through the zone of proximal development and beyond will be used to describe teacher/student interactions throughout the Reading Recovery Program.

The model depicts the developmental progression of a student's ability to regulate his or her own performance as a continuum of phases within and beyond the zone of proximal development: (1) assistance provided by more capable others; (2) a transition from other-assistance to self-assistance; (3) assistance provided by the self; (4) internalization, automatization, fossilization; and (5) deautomatization and recursiveness through prior phases. These phases of development — from other-assistance to self-assistance — recur over and over again in the lifetime of an individual as new cognitive capacities are developed. Furthermore, at any point in time, the performance of an individual will reflect a mix of other-regulation, self-regulation, and automatized processes (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988).

**Assistance provided by more capable others.** Many "at-risk" children have not had the literacy experiences needed to provide a framework for beginning reading and writing instruction (Heath, 1983; Wells, 1985). Therefore,

early on in the Reading Recovery Program, teachers have a major responsibility for creating learning situations that actively involve children in successful acts of reading and writing. Through careful observation and analysis of the child's behaviors, teachers try to understand what the child understands. They determine what the child knows, as well as what he or she needs to learn how to do. For example, the teacher noticing that the child reads for meaning but often his or her language overrides the written text may say, "Read it with your finger" or ask, "Did that match?" The teacher has inferred that the child has a directional problem of coordinating the motor pattern of his hand with the word-finding activities of his ears and eyes and therefore needs to teach the child how to coordinate what he sees with what he points to and says (Clay, 1991). However, over time, through conversation with the teacher, the child develops strategies for independent problem solving when he or she notices when there is no 'match' between his or her language and the printed text.

In the preceding example, the child's goal may have been to read quickly, "like a good reader," and in order to accomplish this goal, he or she invented text. Because the child cannot conceptualize the goal of the activity (integrating directional movement and visual attention to print), the teacher provides this assistance. The teacher's demonstrations, prompts and/or questions allow the student to participate in a reading activity that would be impossible for him or her to do alone. Thus language between the teacher and child (intercognitive) provides a powerful tool for both thinking and communicating around verbal and nonverbal behaviors. Without the teacher's guidance, the "at-risk" child may not have been able to develop these problem-solving skills. Under adult guidance, the child's ZPD is extended.

**Transition from other-assistance to self-assistance.** As the weeks progress, the teacher's responsibility and direction steadily decline, and there is a corresponding increase in the child's proportion of responsibility. The child is prompting himself, often using the teacher's words. I will never forget when one of my Reading Recovery children told me I was his Jiminy Cricket. (Jiminy Cricket is Pinocchio's subconscious in the classic story Pinocchio by Collodi.) When I asked him what he meant he said, "You're my unconscious. You ask me the same questions I ask myself." Even though he didn't choose the appropriate word for his explanation, David was making sense of what we were doing.

Through careful observation of children's behaviors, Reading Recovery teachers become sensitive to these transitions. For example, a child may be able to assist himself by voice pointing, rather than finger pointing, while reading two lines of text. But when presented multiple lines of text, he or she hesitates, resorts to inventing the rest of the text, and then comments, "No, that's not right." The child cannot solve the problem although he knows that something is wrong.

The noticing teacher understands the importance of the child's partially right monitoring behavior and attempts to assist him or her in developing strategies for resolving the conflict. Therefore, thinking that the child can resolve the problem with help, the teacher says, "I liked how you stopped. What did you notice?" Or, "Were there too many words?" Or, "Try that again and read it with your finger." Students in transition from other-assistance to self-assistance are beginning to learn how to function as their own consultants.

**Assistance provided by self.** The latter phases of the ZPD are self-assisted. This phase of development requires the lessening of assistance provided by the teacher (intercognitive influence) and the development of self-regulation (intracognitive influence). It is not uncommon to hear Reading Recovery students comment on their own processing. "No, that didn't make sense." "That doesn't look like the

word ____." But such explicit comments are not always heard nor are they essential. Children will often reread a line or page of text if what they said doesn't sound right. Self-instruction, self-questioning and self-praise indicate the development of cognitive processing inside the learner (intracognitive). These transformations in students' thinking and ability to resolve their own conflicts are observable when children self-correct. Marie Clay (1991) states:

> In correcting the error, the child practiced monitoring, searching, generating, checking, and choosing processes and they were all reinforced because success was contingent upon them. In addition, the signals of error and the new bits of information previously neglected, also contributed to success. During this cognitive activity the reader is sensorially open to new possibilities (Bruner, 1957) and the event seems to have high tutorial potential, but the tutoring is entirely self-tutoring (p. 303).

Self-assistance occurs in the final stages of the ZPD and signals that full, automatic competence is approaching.

**Internalization, automatization, fossilization.** As children progress through the Reading Recovery Program, observable behaviors seem to signal they have constructed strategic control. "They attend to their processing strategies if need be although many times they may be employed without conscious attention" (Clay, 1991, p. 341). They read for meaning and when an error is made, it is noticed and some action occurs. They "cast around all their experience to find cues, strategies and solutions." They ask themselves questions: "What do I know that might help?" "How do I know this?" "What can link up with this?" "Is the message still clear?" (Clay, 1991, p. 341).

Tharp and Gallimore (1988) describe this phase of the learning process in the following way:

> In theoretical terms, once self-directed assistance disappears, we may presume that the individual has emerged from the ZPD for the task at hand. Task

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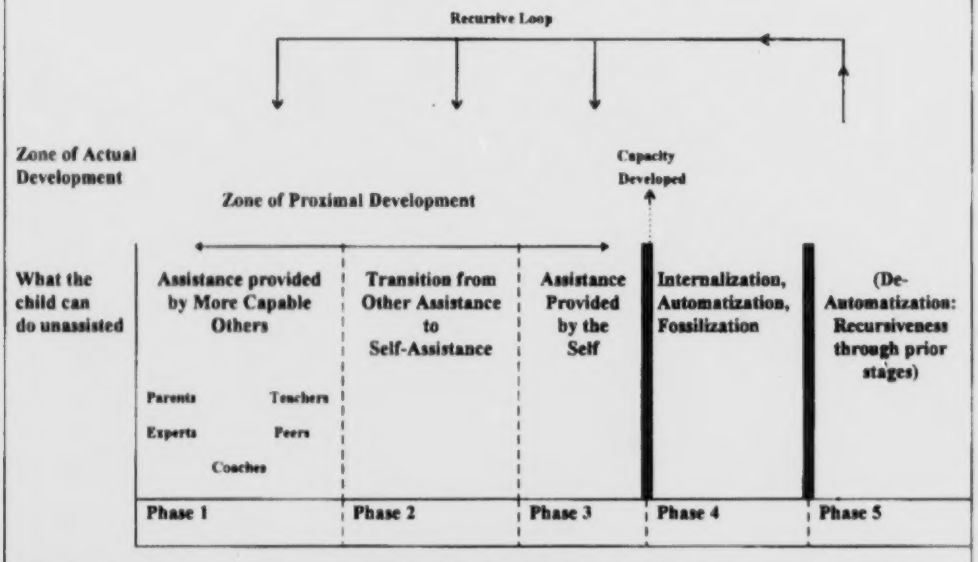


Adapted from Tharp, R. & Gallimore, R. (1988) Rousing minds to life. Cambridge Univ. Press: New York, NY

> execution is smooth and integrated, and its regulation has been internalized and automatized. Assistance, from others or the self, is no longer needed and would now be disruptive. Even self-consciousness itself can interfere with the smooth integration of all task components. Self-control and social control are no longer required. The performance capacity is now developed: Vygotsky used a vivid metaphor — "fossilized" — to describe its fixity and removal from the social and mental forces of change. This fixity, however, is not permanent (p. 257).

**Deautomatization and Recursion.** Deautomatization and recursion occur so regularly during the learning process that they constitute a fifth phase of the normal developmental process.

It often happens that self-regulation is not sufficient to restore performance capacity, and a further recursion — the restitution or other regulation — is required. Whatever the level of recursion, the goal is to reproceed through assisted performance to self-regulation and to exit the zone of proximal development anew into automatization (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988, p. 187).

Although a Reading Recovery child automatically searches, predicts, generates, monitors, cross-checks and orchestrates the strategies, there is no guarantee that his or her competence is permanent. When the child is not successful in applying these established strategies to understand more complex text, deautomatization and recursion through his or her zone of proximal development takes place.

Vygotsky's theory suggests that learning is a lifelong process and is always recursive. The more we know, the more we don't know. It is through assistance by more knowledgeable others that we are challenged to stretch our boundaries and learn more. The substance and structure of the teaching activity within Reading Recovery takes place in an enormously complex interactional setting that powerfully shapes the teacher's learning and, in turn, the student's learning as well.

## Conclusion

During the Reading Recovery year-long course, teachers learn how to assist students by discussion with colleagues and thus begin to understand the complex processing of individuals. There is no sequence through which every child will or should pass. The nature of the program and the teacher/student interaction (conversation and nonverbal action) is different for each child.

It is the knowledge in the heads of teachers which guides their moment-to-moment decisions and enables children to develop a self-extending system. Teachers need to understand the theoretical principles and underlying theories of learning and cognition and be able to relate them to the complex processing occurring when individuals read and write. They need to think about the theoretical base for their decisions, the "why" behind their actions and be tentative and reflective in their practice. They need to think in terms of concepts to be learned, see and understand the 'big picture' and not be stuck at the procedural level. In order to maximize the growth of their students' intra-psychological functioning, they need to understand how the theories, principles and concepts discussed in *Becoming Literate: The Construction of Inner Control* relate to the practice described in *The Early Detection of Reading Difficulties*. √√√

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READING RECOVERY COUNCIL OF NORTH AMERICA

# The Best Of The Running Record

Revised Edition

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# *Descubriendo La Lectura: A Reconstruction of Reading Recovery in Spanish Winter 1994*

*by Kathleen McDonough, Trainer of Teacher Leaders and Olivia Ruiz, Teacher Leader, Tucson, Arizona*

***Descubriendo La Lectura, a reconstruction of Reading Recovery in Spanish, was created for students who are in bilingual education programs, receiving initial literacy instruction in Spanish, and experiencing difficulties in learning to read. These children need what Dr. Clay calls a second chance at learning to read, and their success or failure in native-language literacy will have an impact on how well they learn to read in English as well.***

The Collaborative for Reading Recovery in Spanish/Descubriendo La Lectura is composed of Reading Recovery/Descubriendo La Lectura teachers and teacher leaders who are bilingual educators and site coordinators. The group encompasses school district and university personnel from Arizona, California, Illinois, Massachusetts, and Texas. The goals of the Collaborative include the following:

- further refining and researching the reconstruction of Reading Recovery in Spanish,
- better observing and serving all developing bilingual children in Reading Recovery/Descubriendo La Lectura, and
- incorporating into the Reading Recovery/Descubriendo La Lectura training program more specific cultural, linguistic, and instructional theory and knowledge to better meet the needs of diverse language populations.

In order to reconstruct the program and monitor its impact on both Spanish speaking students and bilingual education teachers, extensive local and national research has been and continues to be conducted. To date, research results indicate that Descubriendo La Lectura is a viable early intervention program for first grade students receiving initial literacy instruction in Spanish (Escamilla, 1992; Ruiz, 1992). The strategies English-speaking students are observed to use while participating in Reading Recovery lessons are the same strategies Spanish speaking students use as they make accelerated progress in Descubriendo La Lectura lessons (McDonough & Brena, 1993).

## National Descubriendo La Lectura Summary Statistics: 1992-1993

In 1992-1993 Descubriendo La Lectura teachers worked with 202 children in five sites in the United States (Table 1). Each site maintains local data collection procedures and prepares an annual report to administrators and school boards. However, because of the importance of gathering data on larger numbers of children across diverse populations, national data is also being compiled.

Not only did Descubriendo La Lectura children for whom lessons were discontinued raise their scores to well within the average band of their classrooms, but they continued to make progress after lessons were discontinued, with no further interventions.

The tables summarize the progress from Fall to Spring of the mean scores on all three of the Diagnostic measures: 1) Writing Vocabulary, 2) Dictation, and 3) Text Reading Level. Table One lists both total Discontinued Children and Program Children.

From Fall to Spring, mean scores for the discontinued children increased from 3.42 to 52.19 on Writing Vocabulary, from 5.38 to 37.48 for Dictation, and from 0.32 to 18.19 for Text Reading. During the same period, mean scores for all program children increased from 3.21 to 48.95 for Writing Vocabulary, from 5.15 to 36.16 for Dictation, and from 0.31 to 16.27 for Text Reading.

Table 3 profiles the progress of children who discontinued from the Program prior to April 1. Children for whom lessons are discontinued have developed a self-extending system and will continue to improve their reading and writing achievement without further intensive one-to-one instruction. The following comparisons involve children who were discontinued at least six weeks prior to the final testing period.

Students for whom lessons were discontinued prior to April 1 evidenced self-extending systems. Entry, exit, and end-of-year scores for three Observational Survey tasks are presented in Table 3. These Descubriendo La Lectura students continued to make progress by independent reading and writing and classroom instruction. Children for whom lessons were discontinued had, for example, an average reading level of 13 upon exiting the program. When tested for Text Reading in the Spring, their average score increased to level 21. These data point to the value of the Program's focus on accelerated progress and the development of each student's self-extending system.

## Summary

The future of Descubriendo La Lectura appears to be extremely promising in the United States. Clearly, the program has produced success for teachers and accelerated progress for those bilingual first grade students who were receiving initial literacy instruction in Spanish and were most at risk. The goal of the Descubriendo La Lectura Program, however, is to reach every first grade student in the lowest twenty percent in reading achievement. The Collaborative for Reading Recovery in Spanish/ Descubriendo La Lectura is committed to making this goal a reality and is seeking support from such sources as foundations, states, and national funding sources. School districts that are interested in joining the Collaborative to initiate Descubriendo La Lectura may request additional information from the Reading Recovery Council of North America. √√√

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## Summary Statistics: Descubriendo La Lectura 1992-93

**Table 1**
**Children Served by the Descubriendo La Lectura Project 1992-93**

| Total Served | Program Children | Discontinued | Percent of Program Children Discontinued |
|---|---|---|---|
| 202 | 137 | 117 | 85 |

**Table 2**
**Observation Scores for Descubriendo La Lectura RR children**

| Measure | Month of Testing | Disc. DLL Children (Mean) | Disc. DLL Children (N=) | DLL Program Children (Mean) | DLL Program Children (N=) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Writing Vocabulary | Fall | 3.42 | 102 | 3.21 | 120 |
| | Spring | 52.19 | 115 | 48.95 | 135 |
| Dictation | Fall | 5.38 | 102 | 5.15 | 120 |
| | Spring | 37.48 | 115 | 36.16 | 135 |
| Text Reading Level | Fall | 0.32 | 102 | 0.31 | 120 |
| | Spring | 18.19 | 115 | 16.27 | 135 |

DLL

**Table 3**
**Progress of Descubriendo La Lectura Children Discontinued Prior to April 1**

| Measure | Fall | Exit | End-of-Year |
|---|---|---|---|
| Writing Vocabulary (Max: 10 Min.) | 3.20 | 46.00 | 53.33 |
| Dictation (Max=39) | 5.63 | 37.27 | 37.63 |
| Text Reading (Max=30) | 0.43 | 13.08 | 21.21 |
| | (N=40) | (N=39) | (N=39) |

## *Helping All Students Learn Winter 1984*

*Raquel C. Mireles, Teacher Leader, Reading Recovery/Descubriendo La Lectura*
*Los Angeles, California*

My concern as a bilingual teacher is to provide conditions of learning that will allow all my students to acquire literacy in their primary language. Success in reading and writing in the primary language establishes a firm foundation for bi-literacy and future academic success. To accomplish this goal, I search for sound language and learning theory to expand my knowledge and support my teaching.

Brian Cambourne's (1988) theory and applications, particularly the Conditions of Learning, inspired me to examine my teaching practices both as a teacher in the classroom and as a teacher in the Reading Recovery/ Descubriendo La Lectura Program. Descubriendo La Lectura serves children who are receiving initial literacy instruction in Spanish. At present I am working with students reading in English and also with students reading in Spanish. This has allowed me to make comparisons across two languages, and I have found a great number of similarities between Reading Recovery/Descubriendo La Lectura and Cambourne's Conditions of Learning.

According to Cambourne (1989), learning to use and control the language of a culture is a tremendous intellectual accomplishment and children do it successfully throughout the world. Infants acquire their maternal language under the care and guidance of their parents or other caretakers in a very natural fashion. From his research, Cambourne concluded that there are certain conditions under which children, beginning at birth, acquire a language. These conditions include the following:

- Immersion
- Demonstration
- Expectations
- Responsibility
- Use
- Approximation
- Response
- Engagement.

Based on the conditions of learning a language, Cambourne (1988) concluded that "while the conditions for learning to talk cannot be precisely replicated for the written mode of language, the principles which they exemplify can" (p. 45). He goes on to say that, when teachers understand the principles, they will try to "simulate for the written word" (p. 45) the conditions that made it possible for oral language to emerge.

In reflecting on my teaching, I recognize the principles of learning identified by Cambourne as they apply to literacy learning in Reading Recovery/Descubriendo La Lectura lessons.

**Immersion.** In Reading Recovery/ Descubriendo La Lectura a student experiences immersion and learns to read by reading whole texts.

There are teaching points throughout the lesson but they follow the lead of the student's strengths and are within the context of what the child is reading or writing. Through the entire lesson children are immersed in meaning-making of complete whole texts.

**Demonstration.** From the very first lesson a Reading Recovery/Descubriendo La Lectura student receives demonstrations of language "wholes" every day. A teacher introduces a new

book, giving an orientation to the meaning and modeling the structure of the text language. Then the student reads the whole book independently but always with the "scaffold" of the teacher when needed, encouraging the student to utilize her own meaning-making strategies. In the beginning lessons the teacher may act as a scribe for students, demonstrating the writing of the student's personal message. As children gain more experience in writing, the teacher only "scaffolds" the process.

**Expectations.** Just as parents have expectations that their child will learn to speak, the Reading Recovery/ Descubriendo La Lectura teacher expects students to continue to develop literacy. All children come to school with some information about the printed word. Ferreiro and Teberosky (1982) claim that "no child starts from zero when he or she comes to school" (p. 280). From their research of Spanish speaking children they concluded that children have their own ideas about the function of print, and continually attach meaning to written text. Similarly, Goodman (1989) has found that environmental literacy has a tremendous impact on preschool students' awareness of print and the function it serves.

Based on the Observation Survey and Roaming Around the Known sessions, the teacher is conscious of the students' strengths and interests. Clay (1979) reminds us that "the most important reason for Roaming Around the Known is that it requires the teacher to stop teaching from her preconceived ideas. She has to work from the child's responses. This will be the teacher's focus throughout the programme" (p. 55).

As lessons begin, the teacher has high expectations that the student will learn to read and write, and, what is more important, based on Roaming Around the Known, the child also has high expectations because she already sees herself as a reader and a writer.

**Responsibility.** Within Reading Recovery/Descubriendo La Lectura lessons the student takes responsibility for reading and writing and is encouraged to use meaning-making strategies, such as predicting, approximating, self-monitoring, self-correcting, and confirming. "The important thing about the self-corrections is that the child initiates them because she sees that something is wrong and calls upon her own resource for working on a solution" (Clay, 1979, p. 58).

**Use/Approximation**. Reading Recovery/Descubriendo La Lectura students have the opportunity to use, employ, and practice their developing control in functional, realistic, and non-artificial ways. Students start reading whole texts from the very beginning. There is no need to wait until a child knows all the letters and their sounds. The main objective is for the child "to have a go" at constructing the meaning of the story. The student is engaged in "reading work" and is encouraged to read; **approximations** are accepted and valued and the student is encouraged to make meaningful predictions and to cross-check to confirm. Errors are seen as miscues and analyzed for the purpose of finding out how the student orchestrates cue sources of information and uses reading strategies to construct meaning.

During the writing portion of the lesson the responsibility is on the student to generate a message. Her language or structure is always accepted as she begins to write, and as a writer she feels free to approximate.

From the beginning the student is encouraged to contribute as much as possible. She listens to herself saying the words, focuses on sounds heard, and predicts letters associated with those sounds. By using sound and letter boxes, the child learns to focus on the details of print. The visual framework allows the child to contribute in any order the sounds heard.

The writing section is a critical part of the lesson. The purpose of writing is to bridge the link between reading and writing. Reading and writing support and extend each other. While

the student is attending to the writing, she is acquiring writing and reading strategies through the language of a message that she owns. Through the use of strategies students become more independent in their reading and writing each time they participate in literacy activities. The teacher is there to accept the student's approximations, and to provide a "scaffold" when needed, temporarily supporting the student to prepare her to work independently.

The theoretical support for the role of teacher in the writing section, as well as any other section of the lesson, is provided by Vygotsky (1978). He identified a "Zone of Proximal Development" as the "distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers." He recognized that learning is social and that interaction between a child and a teacher is critical. Vygotsky thought that mediation was critical for a child to go beyond what can be done independently and make a shift in the present level of understanding and learning.

**Response.** There are responses that support and inform when a teacher models or demonstrates for the child. Other times, the teacher observes and takes advantage of the discoveries a child makes. Constructing meaning is reinforcing for the child.

The Reading Recovery/Descubriendo La Lectura teacher recognizes and reinforces strategies used to construct meaning. Responses are explicit. For example, when the student stops to solve a reading problem, she is encouraged when she considers a strategy: "Good job! You stopped and looked at the picture!" "*¡Muy bien! Te paraste y te fijaste en el dibujo!*" "I like the way you solved the problem by yourself; good readers do that." "*Me gusta como solucionaste el problema tu sola; los buenos lectores hacen eso.*" "How did you know that?" "*¿Como supiste eso?*" One child responded, "I remembered the story, I looked at the picture, and I saw the first letter." "*Me acorde del cuento, me fije en el dibujo y vi las primeras letras.*"

**Engagement.** According to Cambourne (1988), engagement occurs when a learner is convinced that:

*1. She is a potential "doer" or "performer" of these demonstrations she is observing.*

*2. Engaging with these demonstrations will further the purposes of her life.*

*3. She can engage and try to emulate without fear of physical or psychological hurt if her attempt is not fully "correct."*

The Reading Recovery/Descubriendo La Lectura teacher tries to maximize learning in a short time. Within thirty minutes the conditions of literacy learning are manifested throughout the lesson every day. The student constructs and the teacher facilitates the development of a "self-extending system." According to Clay's studies (1991), this self-extending system contributes to continued success in succeeding years in school.

The theory and research of Clay and other internationally known literacy authorities have influenced my way of thinking about teaching and learning. The application of theory in Reading Recovery/Descubriendo La Lectura lessons has provided me with new insights, support, and hope. I want all my bilingual students to become participants and to profit fully in an inquiry-based whole language classroom. I want to make sure all my students acquire the strategies needed to become bi-literate. Most children will, but for those few who need a special, temporary, early intervention, I don't want to leave anything to chance. I want them to see themselves as readers and writers, to be proud and feel good about themselves from the beginning of first grade.

Providing the best conditions for literacy learning in the classroom, and in a temporary Reading Recovery/Descubriendo La Lectura program, insures that all my students will take

control of their own learning. Personal control, independence in problem solving, and participation in meaningful reading and writing experiences will help them to become bi-literate and experience academic success. √√√

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# *Responding to Changing Demographics: Selecting Reading Recovery Books Winter 1994*

*by Linda Garrett, Site Coordinator, St. Paul Public Schools*
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***Linda Garrett, Chapter 1 Curriculum Coordinator and Reading Recovery Site Coordinator of St. Paul, Minnesota, Public Schools, has spent 26 years in education. She has a B.A. and an M.A. from Michigan State University and has completed postgraduate work in Curriculum Systems at the University of Minnesota. Linda is also an Educational Consultant specializing in Curriculum Development and Multicultural Education with school districts in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan.***

While the books used by Reading Recovery teachers must satisfy the instructional needs of the learner, it is essential that they also reflect the reality of our nation's cultural diversity. These requirements are compatible.

The demographic pattern of the United States is changing. In earlier years most immigration was from Europe. Currently most immigration is from Asia and Latin America. By the year 2000, one-third of the U.S. population and more than half the populations of California, Texas, New York, Florida and Illinois will be people of color. The school population is changing faster than the general population. Right now, the twenty-five largest school districts in the nation have more children of color than European American children. As the school population changes, the schools must change. One important change is implementing a multicultural, gender and disability fair curriculum with multicultural, gender and disability fair materials.

## St. Paul's Inclusive Curriculum

The Minnesota State Board of Education had the foresight in 1988 to require all of the state's public school districts, regardless of racial or cultural makeup, to develop plans for an inclusive curriculum, or one that is multicultural, gender and disability fair. The board also mandated a review process to ensure that curriculum and instructional materials would include all racial and cultural groups, both genders and people with disabilities.

The plan adopted by the St. Paul Public School's Board of Education requires that all instructional materials purchased by the district be inclusive. The Board's position is based on the belief that all children, female and male, with or without disabilities, African American, American Indian, Asian American, European American, and Hispanic American, have the right to see themselves reflected positively in the instructional materials used in the classroom.

## Inclusive Reading Recovery Materials

The selection of inclusive Reading Recovery materials is important for two reasons. First, as more urban areas and states with diverse populations adopt Reading Recovery, the population served becomes more diverse. Unfortunately, due to poverty and language barriers, most of the children eligible for Reading Recovery (the lowest 20% of the first grade) will be children of color. Second, as the nation becomes more diverse, European American children in mono-cultural communities desperately need to see the diversity of the

nation reflected positively in their instructional materials. For some children this will be their first exposure to positive images of people of color. These children may live today in a mono-cultural community, but they will not live their whole lives in mono-cultural settings. They will go on to more diverse settings (college, the military or employment in another region) and they must be familiar with diversity. Introducing positive images of diverse people in primary instructional materials begins an essential foundation on which to build.

Some may think that the books used in Reading Recovery are too short to have inclusive components or that the story lines are universal and there is no need for concern. Both views are shortsighted. Reading Recovery children are affected at least as much by the books they read as students in other programs or grades. I have developed a short list of standards for previewing instructional materials for inclusiveness:

1. All people are portrayed in an unbiased way. This includes gender, culture, race, ethnicity, language, age, economic status, disability, family structure and religion.
2. There are no stereotypes in the illustrations or text.
3. The content is factual and balanced.
4. Overall, the book includes rather than excludes.

In selecting Reading Recovery books I also look for balance within the "sets" of books, and I check the country where the book was originally published.

## Moving Towards an Inclusive Reading Recovery Book Set

In the spring of 1992 I found myself in the unique situation of ordering materials for a new site without a teacher leader. Our newly hired teacher leader was working several states away and would not arrive until early August.

I began with the order list provided by The Ohio State University and called local publishers' representatives to request titles for review.

I was disappointed as I previewed the recommended books for inclusiveness. The illustrations in many reflected only one cultural background, European. Every now and then a brown face appeared, but in many cases it was difficult to tell what cultural/racial background was being represented. There were even a few books that contained stereotypes of people of color. I was surprised to find that the recommended Reading Recovery books in 1992 seemed so oblivious to cultural diversity.

The ordering process became complex as I charted my review of each publisher and placed orders. I did not order every book on the list. I made sure that within each "set" of books there was balance among the cultural/racial groups and genders represented. I did not order books with stereotypes, and I ordered a lot of animal books.

I continued to preview every book recommended by our teacher leaders before it was ordered in quantity. I began to talk to everyone who would listen — publishers' representatives, other site coordinators, Ohio State faculty and the teacher leaders at our site. I am pleased to report some promising changes. Several publishers' representatives have told me that their companies are aware of these concerns and they are trying to make changes. Many site coordinators share my concern and are being more selective about their orders. The Reading Recovery Book Selection Committee and The Ohio State University Staff are also exploring ways to make the book list more inclusive.

I urge all sites to join in becoming more selective in their ordering to ensure that Reading Recovery materials reflect our nation's diversity. Together we can make a difference for all the children we serve. √√√

**Ten Quick Ways to Analyze Children's Books for Sexism and Racism**

- Check the illustrations.
- Check the story line.
- Look at the lifestyles.
- Weigh the relationships between people.
- Note the heroes.
- Consider the effects on a child's self-image.
- Consider the author's or illustrator's background.
- Check out the author's perspective.
- Watch for loaded words.
- Look at the copyright date.

Source: *The Council on Interracial Books for Children*

**Standards to use when previewing instructional materials**

√ All people are portrayed in an unbiased way. This includes gender, culture, race, ethnicity, language, age, economic status, disability, family structure, and religion.
√ There are no stereotypes in the illustrations or text.
√ The content is factual and balanced.
√ Overall, the book includes rather than excludes.

# Text Selection for Limited English Proficient Students in Reading Recovery Winter 1994

*Diana Geisler, Teacher Leader, Carollton-Farmers Branch, Texas*
*Yvonne Rodriguez, Teacher Leader, Texas Woman's University*

As our society becomes more diverse, the likelihood of having second language learners or limited English proficient students (LEP) in Reading Recovery programs increases. Reading Recovery teachers often feel ill equipped in providing linguistically diverse populations with the assistance needed to become strategic readers. Reading Recovery teachers must therefore become cognizant of some instructional considerations when working with second language learners.

Appropriate text selection is critical to the success of students learning to read in English. The child who is learning English must be able to comprehend what is read or risks becoming "semilingual" (Schoenfeldt, 1987). Schoenfeldt found that if these students were instructed in reading text beyond their comprehension, they became "word callers" who did not read for meaning. It is important for LEP students to read English that is within their control. Clay (1991, p. 335) states that "text to which children can bring interpretations, and texts which are close to children's oral language use, give them power over the learning tasks."

Since the Reading Recovery program uses hundreds of little story books, Reading Recovery teachers should be able to select texts that are within their range—texts which contain vocabulary, language structures, and meanings within the student's control. When selecting a book, a Reading Recovery teacher needs to maintain a balance between the student's competencies and the features of the text. It is essential that the Reading Recovery teacher consider the student's interests and experiences along with the number of new vocabulary items, the narrative style, level of predictability, and supportive illustrations of a book. Quite often, teachers will select caption books during early lessons in an effort to build vocabulary. LEP students tend to have more difficulty with this type of text. (For example, "flowers and flags" or "teeter-totters and tadpoles" in *Lots of Things*, Dominie Press.) Students do much better with text that is patterned, supportive, and written in complete sentences, as in *I Like Balloons* (Dominic Press): "I like red balloons. I like blue balloons."

Text that is written in rhyme is problematic for the second language learner. This narrative style is cognitively more demanding for students; they must attend to both the concepts being covered and the rhyme: *Breakfast in Bed* (Rigby): "Peanut butter on my nose. Runny honey between my toes. Marmalade drips on my vest. Gritty crumbs tickle my chest."

This type of text can be too demanding even for students whose only language is English. What the child controls can shift quickly and often. At first, a teacher may need to temporarily support a certain language structure that is particularly difficult for the child. Usually, the child's control over that particular structure increases each time he reads the book. In order to see the developing control over a new language structure, it is helpful to take multiple running records on the same book as it moves from first reading into familiar reading. Quite often the child has learned the new structure by the fourth reading. For

example, during the book introduction, the teacher may have to strongly support a specific language structure by emphasizing it and having the child say it with her. Because it is difficult to predict all the structures which may prove to be hurdles for an LEP student, the teacher may need to provide support for problem structures during the first reading also.

It is usually easier to learn a larger unit of language than a smaller one. Running records may be used to inform the teacher of language structures that are still challenging to the child. For example, if the child is struggling with the phrase "all day long" it is more meaningful to emphasize the phrase than to focus on "all" or to break the phrase apart. The teaching point that follows a running record could be a focus on language structure. The teacher should continue taking a running record on that book for the next few days during familiar reading in order to see the developing control over the language. Once the running record reveals fairly good control the teacher could stop taking running records on that book.

Writing is perhaps even more important for the child in learning to read in English than it is for the mono-lingual child. Writing events support oral language development (Freeman, 1992). Reading Recovery teachers should be encouraged to study the sentences that the children generate in writing. These samples of language could serve as guides for selecting books that reflect the syntactical structures within the child's control. The reading miscues and writing events exhibit:

1. the children's active processing of the similarities and differences between the two languages, and
2. the children's expanding acquisition of increasing varieties of English structures and rules. (Nathenson-Mejia, 1987).

Like all Reading Recovery teachers, the teacher of LEP students in Reading Recovery should observe the child carefully, analyze his or her responses, and in turn respond to the child in order to help her or him learn how to process while reading for meaning and become proficient at the next level of difficulty. √√√

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# *"We Goed to Readin' ": Understanding How Children Learn Language*
## *Fall 1995*

*by Nancy Anderson, Doctoral Student*
*The Oho State University*

Oh, how tempting it is to correct our Reading Recovery students' obvious misuses of language conventions as they dictate something like, "We goed to readin'," for the writing portion of their lessons. Why is it important that we honor their approximations? Through my investigations I found that the spoken phrase, "We goed to readin' " holds strong evidence that the child was constructing an hypothesis about how to communicate an experience. In some cases, it might be mistaken as an error, confusion or sign of weakness. Instead, it is evidence of the problem-solving process a child goes through as he/she struggles to communicate the meaning within his/her world.

We are challenged by Marie Clay to learn to comprehend children's understanding (1991.) Understanding how children acquire language will enhance our insights as to how Reading Recovery children may be supported throughout their program and allow us to acknowledge, value and honor the oral language skills they bring to school. These skills are a rich resource upon which to base instruction (Cambourne, 1988.) Therefore, the purpose of this article is to highlight the process children engage in when they learn to talk, and then examine how we might tap into this valuable resource in our teaching.

### Oral Language Acquisition

The process of becoming literate is quite complex. However, the children we are working with have already mastered an amazingly complex task. They have learned the language of their community, regardless of the economic, intellectual, social or physical state of their environment. Children are born with a natural biological disposition and drive to make sense of their experiences and strategies for doing so. They possess an inherent sociability from birth (Wells, 1986.) Children have the "hardware" or neurons in their brains at birth to learn language. The environment they are born into acts as a sort of "software" program that kicks the hardware into action.

As caregivers interact with a developing young child on a daily basis, a problem-solving process of learning language takes place. The child attempts to communicate intended meaning and makes an hypothesis on how to do so. For example, a child who wants juice might say, "drink." The caregiver gives water to the child who realizes the intended message was not understood and rejects the water, pointing to the juice in the refrigerator. The caregiver responds by saying, "Oh, you want juice." Thus, the child reformulates or modifies her knowledge of how to communicate the need for juice. The next time the child desires juice, she may utter, "juice."

This oral process is recursive as a child actively builds or constructs a language system. Clay characterizes this process as one of the early self-extending systems. Each interaction with a child's physical and social world improves her ability to communicate meanings (1991.) Through this self-generating process children learn how to learn language.

This amazing accomplishment takes place without direct instruction or a planned, sequenced curriculum. Caregivers respond to children and in essence learn how to guide them to their intended meanings. Adults accept where the children are and do not

impose rules or conventions as they mediate toward intended messages. Positive reinforcement permeates this relationship as caregivers encourage children to speak.

### Children as Active Meaning Makers

Evidence of the self-extending system's development lies within the creative constructions (Lindfors, 1991) spoken by children as they attempt to communicate their intentions through phrases such as, "We goed to reading" or "I don't want no milk." Children are not simply imitating adult speech, but rather using their existing knowledge about the way language works and applying it to new situations. These types of errors can be characterized as compelling evidence that children actively construct their own hypotheses about language (Clay, 1991.)

As children enter school it is highly important that we recognize they come with the ability to use language in their homes that is reflective of their cultural and social backgrounds. They communicate with family and friends in ways that may be different from those they experience in school. We must be careful not to see these different ways of using language as "wrong" or label children as "slow" because they aren't familiar with the new demands that schools place on them. It is our job to help children expand their ways of using language by familiarizing them with the means of using language in a school setting.

Some students we encounter in Reading Recovery have difficulty making the transition from using language at home to using language in an academic setting. These children enter school with an existing set of problem-solving strategies used to communicate in their home settings. Indeed, as Don Holdaway put it, all children who have learned to talk are "active, hypothesizing, generating language users" (Holdaway, 1979). However these problem-solving strategies may begin to shut down as children experience frustration with the transition. As a result children are unable to tap into the powerful strategies brought with them to school when they attempt to learn to read and write. These children need to be given credit for what they can do with language and supported as they expand their ways of using language to include how to communicate in school.

### Reading Recovery and Language Learning

**Roaming Around the Known**. The one-on-one setting of Reading Recovery lends itself to the nurturing and encouraging interactions that help support oral language development. Reading Recovery teachers accomplish this by engaging the child in meaningful interactions from the first day of Roaming Around the Known. During a two-week period we act as co-constructors of meaning by interacting with the children and immersing them in language, both written and spoken. This parallels the support parents or caregivers provide as they coax young toddlers to speak. Reading Recovery teachers support children as they anticipate and predict how the children can incorporate meaning with print in the repertoire of knowledge.

Within the supportive atmosphere of Roaming Around the Known, the problem-solving processes once used by the children become activated as they begin to gain the confidence to take risks. A Reading Recovery teacher's purpose is to engage the children and change them from passive to active participants in the academic setting.

**Book Selection.** Once lessons begin we support the children through careful selection of books just as adults control toddlers' language when speaking to them. Books are selected according to the strategies and strengths the children control. Language in Reading Recovery books is similar to spoken language. This helps the children's transition to the more difficult literacy language of books.

**Writing.** Home language is honored as we write "stories" that are about the children's lives or experiences. As Reading Recovery teachers we don't impose our structure upon the children's attempts to make meaning with print. We use their already-existing hypotheses about the way language communicates meaning and guide them toward conventions conducive to success in an academic setting and in a literate society. Therefore we record the children's approximations which over time will document growth.

Children are invited to use their own language to tell a story. The procedures suggest a variety of topics, and Clay (Guidebook, p. 29) recommends that teachers vary the invitation so that a set, or even dreaded, routine is not established. A routine might produce only safe, familiar patterns or abbreviated messages that may not present new problem-solving opportunities. One student quickly generated her sentence, "I went to my Grandpa's house," but then added, "unless you want me to make it shorter."

Clay (1993) outlines ways to interact with the children that support, extend and value their language (Guidebook, p. 28.) Before the new story is composed children can be invited to reread one or more of their previous stories. Clay (Guidebook, p. 29) states that this "indicates the value placed on writing and the messages in writing" the children have recreated with the teacher's help.

One child, Chantell, generated a personal story that was quickly recorded and repeated as given: "My mom having a boy and she going to get a crib." This was definitely Chantell's personal story and her own language. As she worked on writing her wonderful story, several times in the rereading she slipped in the 's and was actually saying, "My mom's having a boy ... ." Teachers need to be careful observers and *listeners*. Chantell was making some important revisions as she worked through her story. She was shifting to "book language" form and providing an important teaching point for the teacher to use. Inexperienced teachers are sometimes so concerned with capturing and using the child's own message and language that they forget to listen for the natural edits that good writers might make as they commit their stories to a written form. Although we record the child's story as given, we should be flexible enough to allow for the self-edits that carry the child up the pathway that high-progress readers and writers seem to travel so easily.

As you listen to Reading Recovery teachers interact with their children you can hear them praising the children for their attempts or hypotheses about the way print matches our spoken language. "That was a good try" is a phrase I hear often as a student tries, for example, *water/lake*, or *tooken/taken*.

## Conclusion

Meeting the challenge of understanding children's understandings (Clay, 1991) requires us to acknowledge and give credit to children for the language learning that has already taken place before they enter school. The teacher's task is to help children make links between what they can already do with language and the new challenges of school (Clay, 1991, p. 27.) Even if our first impulse might be to correct obvious errors we must resist this impulse. Through engaging children in meaningful interactions we help them act and take control of their own literacy. It is our job to open the reservoir and tap into the problem-solving capabilities children already possess. √√√

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READING RECOVERY COUNCIL OF NORTH AMERICA

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READING RECOVERY COUNCIL OF NORTH AMERICA

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# *A Closer Look at the Writing Component in the Reading Recovery Program Autumn 1990*

*by Mary Fried*
*Reading Recovery Trainer*
*The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio*

***"I see writing as a means of slowing up the complex activity so that all the pieces can be interwoven." (Clay, 1982, p. 211.)***

Think of yourself as an adult learner learning a new skill. Have you ever tried to learn to play the piano or any musical instrument, learned to sing a new song, or learned to knit or crochet? What is the process for the learner? The learner, even the adult learner, slows it down, learns the basic steps, practices the necessary movements to gain motor skills and then practices until becoming accustomed to the task. Eventually the task can be completed with the little or no analysis. The writing component of the Reading Recovery lesson provides the young learner with the opportunity to slow down the process, to learn the basics of how letters are formed and how print operates. Writing provides practice for the necessary movements to gain motor control for writing.

The importance of the writing component goes far beyond gaining motor control skills. Through writing, young children are also provided with the opportunity to slow down the reading process. "Auditory, visual, and motor systems are all at work when the child writes and all contribute to greater skill in reading." (Clay, 1982, p. 217.) When a child composes and writes his/her own story the child:

- Uses background experience, knowledge of the world
- Uses knowledge of language
- Uses motor skills for creating specific letter forms
- Organizes behavior into an appropriate sequence of action
- Attends to the details of letters
- Attends to correct letter order
- Uses sound segmentation strategies
- Associates sounds of oral language with specific phonemes
- Uses reading knowledge to check on his/her own written message that has been created (Clay, 1982, p. 209).

Clay's years of observation of young children as they learn to read and write, her research, and her writings provide powerful insights into the interrelationships of the reading process and the writing process. These insights have been incorporated into the Reading Recovery lesson. This article focuses on the writing component of the lesson and the reassembling of the cutup story.

## Writing serves to organize the visual analysis of print and the oral analysis of language.

Through writing, children employ their visual and motor skills to attend to details of letter forms. For many of the children in Reading Recovery the teacher must provide a model and guide the children manually and verbally in learning to form letters. As quickly as possible, the child is responsible for this task at an independent level. Left-to-right letter order within words, the use of space to signal the end of one word and the beginning of another, and the left-to-right, return sweep directionality can be established or reinforced during writing.

The quality of the letter forms and the

observation of children as they write provide evidence of how the motor and visual systems are operating. Using large movements in the air or on the chalkboard to learn the basic movements needed to form letters seems to help children establish the movement patterns that are required to produce legible writing. Students use big movement practice in the beginning; teachers work to shift them to conventional size print as soon as possible. Slow, oversized writing may be acceptable when learning the task; however, if the child remains at this stage, he/she may not be a successful writer and will be viewed as a low progress student in the classroom. Reading Recovery teachers must work to get fast, fluent, proportional-sized writing.

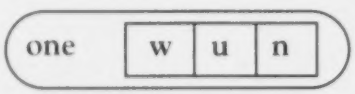
Along with visual and motor processing, the child as a writer is also using his/her auditory system to learn about the sound-symbol relationships of our language. In Reading Recovery there is a minimum of stress on letter forms but a maximum focus on learning to hear and record the sounds of words. High progress readers appear to go from sounds to letters and letters to sounds quite easily. However, this reciprocal analysis should not be assumed for children who are having a difficult time learning to read. Reading Recovery students may have a difficult time hearing the components of what they are saying (Clay, 1982).

Here are some confusions you may have noted:

- Cannot distinguish one word from a whole sentence
- Cannot hear components of a word
- Can identify only the last sound or dominant consonant
- Cannot hear beginning sounds or vowels
- Cannot say a word in a fashion to hear sound components but depends on the teacher model.

The specific Reading Recovery procedures used for sound analysis and hearing the sounds in words are outlined in detail in Clay (1985) on pages 64, 65, 66 and are not discussed in this article.

The goal of sound analysis is for the child to learn how to write words and to be independent in getting to new words he/she wants to write in stories. Reading Recovery teachers must provide many opportunities with the most productive words to bring this learning about. Be careful! Do not use boxes for words that are irregular; selected words should contribute to a clear understanding of the process, as shown in this example.




Also, be cautious in asking for an extensive letter-by-letter analysis of words on the writing page that are too difficult to work out in boxes on the practice page.

### Writing their own messages ensures that the intent of print is meaning driven.

When a child realizes that the messages we speak can be written down, he/she has acquired the central concept required for reading and writing progress. This realization is usually accomplished before children enter school. How many of you have had a young child hand you a scribble-covered paper and ask, "What does this say?" or have been commanded "Read this," or simply told, "This says, 'Mommy loves me.' " Unfortunately, entry to school for some children means an end to writing messages. Instead, writing becomes an artistic activity involving neatly copying letter forms with little concern for meaning.

Clay (1982) observes that children quickly tire of the required copying task. Writing that focuses on the message allows for the exploration of letters and sounds while reinforcing the important concepts that letters form words and print carries meaning. In the classroom, journal writing that focuses on reading and

writing messages is an excellent way for a student to be introduced or to continue his/her interest in using print to write personal messages.

Writing a message is a vital part of the daily Reading Recovery lesson. It is important that the child generates his/her own message. The message can be based upon a book he/she works through during the actual writing process with the support of the teacher. The written message now becomes the text for rereading. The meaning of the self-composed message is clearly in focus for the author-reader and provides a rich source of cues for self checking.

Reading Recovery teachers may need to support the child or even shift the child in order to "hatch out" a meaning rich sentence. Early in their Reading Recovery program, many students are comfortable with a safe pattern for writing, such as "I like to ____, I love my ____, I can see a ____." Although this is an acceptable starting point, the teacher must quickly and expertly shift the child to less safe but more productive writing. Talking a bit about the wonderful story that has just been read for the running record before pulling out the writing book often provides a beautiful sentence. Reading Recovery teachers should also monitor their own behavior so that the child's message is not built on the teacher's pattern in order to provide an opportunity to work on specific words. Do not sacrifice the power of the child's composing a message for the sake of item teaching. One section of the procedures offers an exception to the child's control of generating the sentence. "When It Is Hard to Remember" (Clay, 1985) offers procedures for the few children who have difficulty with recall on most occasions and are having difficulty with the basic links of oral language with printed text. Even in this special case, note on page 80, the procedure is stated to "encourage the child to include the word in his written story." The Reading Recovery teacher should not say "write a story with 'can' in it today" but rather, should value and recognize the power of working with the child's own message.

**Writing their own message ensures a familiar structure that reflects the children's own oral language.**

The structure of the written message should reflect the child's language. Why are self-composed messages important for Reading Recovery? Why should we as Reading Recovery teachers accept grammatically incorrect constructions?

An example is a message like "He goed to the store." The intent of the writing is not to produce grammatically correct sentences but for the child to discover the relationship between oral language and symbolic print. In the beginnings of learning to read and write, learning the systematic way that printed text is used to record messages overrides our concern for "correct" grammar. Sentence structures that mirror the language structures of the child increase the child's opportunities to use strategies that enable him/her to predict text, monitor for accuracy, detect errors, and self-correct (Clay, 1985). Familiar text structure is guaranteed through rereading of the child's own writing. The child's familiar written stories may form the core of familiar rereading material at the early stages of the child's program in Roaming Around the Known.

As children build an understanding of how printed language operates through their writing and as they move along in their lessons, the structure of their stories may be influenced by the book language they hear and read daily. The quantities and qualities of the little books in Reading Recovery provide a rich source of interesting and fun stories and book language patterns. Some examples are: "I'll fim-fam-fight'em", "Grandpa, Grandpa come with me." Many Reading Recovery students easily incorporate book language into their stories. Through discussing the stories read and/or talk-

ing about important personal events, a sentence or story that has elements of a more formal written language structure naturally emerges. However, the teacher is cautioned on changing the child's sentence during the stage when the child is trying to establish a link between oral and written language. To change or not to change, depends, as always, on the child's stage of progress. For a further discussion of this aspect of writing, please read "Thoughts in writing," found in Clay (1979, pages 89-90).

### Using the child's written text for rereading and reassembling strengthens important reading strategies.

As the child works to write his/her sentence, rereading should be encouraged or even demanded. Rereading the sentence may promote self-monitoring and independence (Clay, 1982). During rereading the child may also become aware of the purpose of standard letter forms, layout, and spacing. Writing standards now have a functional value. Many teachers in the classroom and some Reading Recovery teachers encourage their students to use "finger spacing" when writing their sentence.

I view finger spacing as a prop. Many times it is an awkward prop. Clay states (1985, page 63) "props should be used only for the period for which they are essential." Students need to learn to visually sort out the spacing of letters and words in lines of print. The teacher's reminders and the child's dependence on the physical use of "finger spacing" do not promote the visual analysis of placement. They are or should be only a temporary device for checking. Because of the awkward coordination of finger spacing and writing, Reading Recovery teachers may want to consider the temporary use of a small piece of sentence strip paper to demonstrate the spacing concept and to use as a checking device. But even this prop should be hurriedly dismissed as the child develops the concepts of word boundary spaces.

Reassembling the cutup sentence is a basic component of the Reading Recovery lesson. What is the child learning as he/she reassembles the cutup sentence? Clay (1982) lists these examples:

- One-to-one correspondence of printed and spoken words
- Directional movement
- Sequencing
- Monitoring/checking strategies
- Searching for visual cues
- Holding meaning and structure in memory to use as cues
- Breaking oral language into segments
- Word study
- Self-correcting.

The mutual benefits of reading and writing are so strong in the Reading Recovery program that it has been suggested that the true name of the program should be Reading and Writing Recovery! As a Reading Recovery teacher, you have the evidence presented to you daily as you work with students. You experience the power of building on the child's writing strengths to get accelerated progress in reading. You see the gains the children make in both reading and writing as they are discontinued from the program and continue to learn and make progress as successful students in the classroom. "Writing plays a significant part in the early reading process." (Clay, 1982, p. 208.) √√√

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# *Learning to Look at Print Autumn 1992*

*by Steve Hansell*
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Early strategies of reading (left-to-right orientation, one-to-one matching, and finding words) can be directly related to learning to look at print. As adults, it is easy to forget that we have to learn how to look at things. Our family recently spent a week on Great Abaco Island in the Bahamas. Since the roads there are few and deeply rutted, we got around by a boat we had rented. The waters in the area are relatively calm and contain all of the beautiful colors you see in travel brochures and paintings. In addition, the water is clear enough to see giant starfish on the bottom where it is 25 feet deep.

The problem for a boat renter is how to know what the colors of water mean in relation to depth. To learn where it was safe to cruise full-throttle and where it was necessary to go slowly, we had to learn to look at the water. This meant going slowly at first and then gradually testing new hypotheses as we gained experience. By the end of the week, we knew a few familiar channels that were safe at any tide; we knew a few channels that were safe at high tide only; and we had a working system for speeding up or slowing down when we were in unfamiliar water. In short we were learning how to look at the water to achieve our purposes.

Most children who have been read to for four years before they enter first grade do not need to learn how to look at print. This fact makes it easy for teachers to think that a child who has not learned to look at print has little hope of learning to read. A common myth is that a child who reverses letters after a month in first grade has some incurable condition. While it is true that this child has more to learn, it is not true that he cannot learn. Instruction in looking at print is instruction aimed at helping a child learn the early strategies of reading.

## Helping a Child Learn to Look

Instruction in looking at print can take place at the levels of text, word, and letter within a single lesson. At the text level, we help a child point to words in a left-to-right direction. As necessary, the child may need to use a long pointer to slow down rapid, approximate pointing and develop slower, more precise pointing. To point accurately while reading, the student must develop a wide range of understanding, including knowing what a word is in both spoken and written language.

The whole task of composing and writing sentences requires attention to print. As we support the child's writing, we often digress briefly to pay attention to a particular word or letter. Instruction and supported practice in making spaces between words gives a child the opportunity to develop the concept that a word is a group of letters surrounded by spaces. The teacher also has opportunities to help the student look carefully at words that are easy and productive to learn. We ask the student to take to fluency a word that can almost be written by having him or her look at print and write that word several times until he or she can do so quickly, without looking at a model. For a student who has difficulty with this task, we digress further to attend to letter formation. Alternatively, we may ask the student to match a model of the word with magnetic letters. As

necessary, we model, guide hands, and ask the child to trace letters and words. It may seem to us that we are teaching words, but we are using these words and the letters that they are made up of to teach a child to look at print as a part of learning early strategies.

Follow up instruction in reconstructing the text from a cut-up teacher-written sentence strip also requires the child's attention to words and sentences. We deliberately cut these sentences into chunks that provide manageable challenges to the child's understanding of print. At these early stages, we cut sentences into phrases and/or words so that the child will have to examine the print in order to reconstruct the sentence. If needed, we leave the model in plain view and ask the child to place the cut up words or phrases with the same words or phrases in the writing book. As quickly as possible for the individual, we move to asking the child to reassemble the sentence on the table top and to reconstruct the sentence with the writing book closed. By the time a child can regularly reconstruct the sentence without looking back and forth at the model several times for each word, he has probably learned to see print as words made up of letters. Still, we must be careful not to assume that he sees words as we do. He may recognize a word just by the first letter or the last letter, the length, or some other feature we do not use. This whole process will vary according to the strengths and needs of individuals.

A first grade teacher expressed concern that one of her students who is in Reading Recovery could read a word on one page, but couldn't read the same word on another page. This comment may be analyzed to suggest that the teacher thinks the child sees what the teacher sees when she looks at the word. Again, this may be true for children who have learned to look at print, but it may not be true for those who have not. The child who does not know how to look at print may focus on one aspect of a word (the "l" in look, for example) on one page and another aspect of the same word (perhaps the "k") at another time. Even after repeated formations of magnetic letters or writing, when a child who does not know how to look at print sees the same word in context or in contrast to another word, he may not be able to distinguish it as being the same. Alternatively, he may recognize it as being "that word" but not be able to label it. We will be less frustrated as teachers if we recognize this situation as being representative of the child's lack of knowledge of how to look at print. Once we recognize this state, we can teach for strategies by asking the child to compare the word to a model once more, to make a match.

A child's knowledge about print takes years to develop. He learns to look at print in different ways as he engages himself in the task of making sense of marks on paper. The teacher's role is to observe the child's behavior, hypothesize what the child may be thinking to produce that behavior, and respond to the behavior in such a way as to allow the child to reach further than he could on his own. To do this, the teacher must have his or her own theory of reading, try to make sense of the child's attempts, and have the ability to present the child with experiences that may provide evidence of a need to look at print in a new way.

We would not presume that we could navigate a boat throughout a small region after one week of practice in looking at the water there. We know we simply do not have enough experience to create correct hypotheses with the same speed as a native of the area. Similarly, because we learned to navigate the waters of Abaco Sound, we would not expect to see the same features in the Chesapeake Bay, or in Lake Erie, or the Mississippi River. A master navigator, like a good reader, never stops learning to look at the medium within which he works. Learning to look at print is a progression. We discover that we process print from left to right (in English) and that the alphabet-

ic nature of our print forgoes simple phonetic matching. Our print allows for similar spelling of meaningful units even when they have different pronunciation (nation, national) and for variants of spelling patterns from other languages (ballet, racquet, beautiful, science). Specific relationships among spelling patterns may be used by readers at many levels, but the readers may not be consciously aware of the patte . Once a child engages in looking at print, he has the opportunity to learn words and learn about words as he develops the strategies of monitoring, self-correcting, and searching for visual cues. While meaning is the goal of reading and meaning cues, good readers orchestrate their search for meaning with their knowledge of language and their knowledge of print.

Comprehension precedes knowledge of print at these early stages, but without developing a thorough knowledge of print, a child is limited to dependence on a strong introduction to the text and strongly supported reading. A child who engages in reading discovers new information about print as he reads just as frequently as he discovers new information about the ways authors organize text. It is this growing knowledge of the world, language, text and print that allows a child to rapidly recognize words. The speed and fluency of a good first grade reader belies the fact that he may be using his knowledge of print to figure out new words on the run. But this fluency begins when we help a child learn to look at print. √√√

# *Organizing Reading Recovery Lessons for Efficiency and Effectiveness Autumn 1993*

*by Steve Hansell*
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Completing a whole Reading Recovery lesson in 30 minutes is a challenge for both teachers and students. Yet the rationale behind the time limit for lessons is firmly grounded in the early field-trial research for Reading Recovery and in the learning theory that informs the program. Good teaching within the time limit requires teachers to respond quickly and flexibly to students, but this kind of efficiency is not sufficient; teachers must also be effective decision makers at each step of the lesson. This article outlines some of the commonalties among efficient teachers who are also effective decision makers.

## Why a lesson time limit?

The early field trial research in New Zealand was a critical factor in establishing 30-minute lessons. In the 1978 field trials average lesson time varied across the five teachers involved from a low of 26.7 minutes to a high of 40.5 minutes. Clay found that the benefits of the lesson generally decreased after a period of 30 minutes, perhaps because the child's attention tended to wane or simply because enough had been accomplished for one day.

By the 1979 replication of the field trial study with 48 teachers, lesson time was established at 30 minutes (Clay, *Early Detection*, pp. 88-95). This period offered sufficient Reading Recovery teaching for the maximum number of students. This decision contributed to the efficiency of the program. Clay states: "Decisions not to do certain things in recovery programmes may be very important. This is a somewhat novel concept in the area of reading difficulties. It relates to economical use of the child's learning time" (*Early Detection*, p. 84).

Clay discusses error rate and teaching efficiency in *Becoming Literate*: "A higher error rate blurs the matrix of cues. The child becomes confused and instead of a progressive gain in skill the activity becomes non-progressive" (p. 307). Perhaps this paraphrase would apply: A higher rate of teaching blurs the opportunity for learning.

Lessons that are too long may provide the teacher with too many opportunities for teaching and confuse the child, making the lessons non-progressive. The 30-minute limit requires selectivity, intensity, and teacher decision making that involves efficient choices on the run. Clay states: "Acceleration depends upon teacher selection of the clearest, easiest, most memorable examples with which to establish a new response, skill, principle, or procedure" (*Early Detection*, p. 53)

## Commonalities Among Effective, Efficient Teachers

With all of this reasoning and research, teachers still find it difficult to include all aspects of a lesson within 30 minutes. More experienced teachers often develop their own techniques for efficiently completing the lesson. Fast pacing is facilitated by constructing a high level of knowledge of the procedures for responding to students. Knowledge and practice allow teachers to respond more quickly and flexibly, and lessons become more efficient. But lessons must also be effective, and the critical element in effective teaching is teacher decision making. Observations of effective teachers suggest there are important decisions

to be made at each step of the lesson. While each of these decisions is based on a specific interaction at a specific time, there are commonalities among efficient teachers who are also quite effective.

### Overarching Decisions

Efficient teachers decide in advance on a **probable** focus for a lesson based on careful observations of the child and an understanding of what the child needs to learn how to do. They concentrate on supporting the student in the general direction of this focus throughout the lesson. Perhaps more importantly, efficient teachers ignore many aspects of reading behavior that would distract the student from the focus of the lesson. Concentrating to get a change in student learning and ignoring behavior that is unrelated to the focus of the lesson is the essence of efficient decision making. Decisions that support the lesson focus can be seen in every part of the lesson. However, it is important to note that the focus is not rigidly adhered to; effective teachers remain tentative and flexible. They seem to recognize unexpected opportunities for teaching based on the child's responses. It is as if they have a clear picture of the destination the child needs to reach and they have thought out a route for the trip, but they are quick to recognize a new road or short cut and they self-correct any wrong turns.

Another overarching factor in efficient teaching is organization. Materials are conveniently located for immediate use. Books are pre-selected and ready for each child. Instructional records are complete and well organized. One hallmark of the teacher who is not only efficient but also quite effective is the quality of observational notes and the depth of analysis reflected in these notes.

### Rereading Familiar Books

Several enabling decisions are made during rereading. The first is to provide the student with a choice of books. Students will almost always choose books that are appropriate to develop fluency and will allow new discoveries while reading. Teachers must be careful, especially as students are accelerating, to provide easy books among the choices. Rereading is a time to develop fluency, not a time to struggle through a book that was difficult on yesterday's running record. Teaching points are selective and at least one easy book is read fluently during this time.

It is also vitally important that students get to reread many short books rather than parts of one longer book. Allington's research shows that successful first grade readers read about 1,600 words per week. We must insure at least that much practice for readers who need to accelerate. Clay states: "*A child who is on the way to independence needs as many books as possible at his level. Allow the child to learn to read by reading*" (Italics by Clay, *Early Detection*, p. 68).

One way to provide time for rereading several books is to be quiet while students are reading fluently. Effective teachers may provide positive comments as a student turns the page rather than interrupting the reading. Effective teachers remember that the goal is NOT word perfect reading, so they do not interrupt fluent reading to correct minor errors. Instead, they celebrate the fluency and construction of meaning during rereading. The exception to the general guideline of not interrupting fluent reading occurs early in the program if a student invents the text. This supported situation is ideal for helping the child begin to check approximations with the print; and for many children who are freely inventing, matching words and text is a priority in early lessons. But, as children acquire basic concepts about print, fluent strategic reading with occasional minor errors must be supported and valued.

### Running Record

Effective teachers use running record time to observe, record, and analyze student behavior. They do not try to teach the student at this

time or influence his behavior. If the student does not try to figure out a word and often appeals to the teacher, the teacher's role is to urge "You try it" but to provide the word if there is no response. These decisions (such as how long to wait or when to tell) are hard to make. We want to provide time for a student to do reading work, but all of this must be done rapidly. The teacher who waited a full 65 seconds before telling the student a word, not once, but **three** times within the same lesson was not operating efficiently. In addition, the child lost some of the meaning of the story. Think of all the learning that could have gone on in those three minutes!

Through observing, recording, and analyzing, effective teachers decide while the student is still reading what they will come back to after the running record. Many star, or mark in some other way, the points to which they will attend and make sure the page number is noted. Then, after a brief interaction about the story, they return to tell the student how pleased they were with a specific performance (such as rereading and trying a word with the appropriate first sound). Efficient teachers know they can get caught in a swamp of distraction with too much talk at this time. Asking a student how he/she arrived at an answer is often much less productive than simply telling the student what he or she did and asking for confirmation.

Effective teachers also choose points for strategy instruction to fit the overall focus of the lesson. They ignore some errors and select the most productive examples to teach at the processing/problem solving level. I have watched inefficient teachers take as long as five minutes after a running record to review every error a student made. A scattered review of every error wastes time and weakens psychic energy needed to learn. Remember that too much teaching may blur the learning. I saw one effective teacher ignore a loss of 1:1 matching and even skip a line of text when the student was obviously beyond that point. The student was clearly reading for meaning; the loss of match was only a careless error. The teacher used the time to address a more powerful example that helped to move the child forward in his learning. This teaching reflected efficient and effective decision making on the run.

### Letter/Word Work

Effective teachers know what students know and do not know; they ask for responses on the leading edge of the student's knowledge, yet they are ready to support as much as needed. Effective teachers know when to demonstrate, when to prompt specifically, when to prompt more generally, and when to wait. For early learning gains, effective teachers provide time for slower processing with the first letters and words that the student learns. Effective teachers know it is necessary to take the time for students to learn how to learn letters and words through models and oral repetition and by tracing, writing on various surfaces, and manipulating magnetic letters during the lesson. They do not accept the first correct response as representing learning. They insist on over learning and returning to text as part of learning how to differentiate one word from another. Often they come back to check on learning the following day. As learning progresses, effective teachers seem to sense it is time to shift gears; and they insist on the most rapid response the child can make. Learning how to learn letters and words shifts up to fluency practice and automatic responding.

Effective teachers know when to move on from initial consonant substitution to final consonant substitution and to the examination of patterns in words. They celebrate the discoveries that students make on their own and quickly share other examples of the same concept. When students do not examine print, effective teachers provide the tasks of making and dismembering words with magnetic letters

to draw attention to the detail that these students overlook. However, effective teachers always look for ways to promote leaps in knowledge rather than small steps or a set sequence of learning. They seem to be experts on reacting to the child's responses or insights.

### Writing

Efficient teachers get sentences from their students quickly - often with a direct prompt about the running record book. Compare the prompts "What would you do with a cat like Greedy Cat?" and "What do you want to write about today?" The latter prompt may be effective for verbal students, but many Reading Recovery students need a suggestion for composing a sentence quickly. A guaranteed way to slow the composition of a sentence is to prompt, "Tell me a sentence with the word 'and'," a procedure which is discouraged in Reading Recovery. I observed a teacher leader turn this ineffective prompt into a highly efficient and productive prompt. She said, "Do you like ice cream?" "Yes!" replied the student. The teacher leader responded, "Tell me two kinds of ice cream you like." A personal sentence was easily generated which contained the word 'and.'

As soon as effective teachers hear the composed sentence, they begin to decide how they will deal with each part. They think about which words are known, which would be appropriate for sound analysis, which words might be taken to fluency, and which words could be compared to other known words. They decide what will be the most productive use of time based on what the child needs to learn how to do. Effective teachers don't work on every word, but they do work very efficiently and productively on the practice page. Diane DeFord's research on the writing component of Reading Recovery produced revealing evidence on the effective use of the practice page. One teacher who had high student outcomes had 244 entries on the practice page over 60 lessons while a teacher with low student outcomes had only 34 entries on the practice page over 60 lessons. Entries were defined as each word put in boxes for hearing sounds in words, words practiced for fluency, any endings or letters practiced for fluency or formation, or separate words written to compare to other words (DeFord, D., in press 1993). It is clear that effective teachers take the time to teach what their students need to learn how to do on their own, but this teaching must be decisive in order to fit it into the lesson efficiently.

### New Book Introduction

New book introduction begins with the selection of an appropriate book. Ideally, the book will be interesting to the individual student and have mostly familiar concepts. The format of the book, number of lines per page, length of sentences, placement of words, etc., will be appropriate. The effective teacher must know the book and the student well enough to provide an introduction that bridges the major pitfalls but leaves enough work to challenge the student to apply the strategies which are the focus of the learning.

Having introduced the book, the teacher must allow the student to do the reading work. When necessary, the teacher prompts for strategies, using questions suggested by *Early Detection*. The effective teacher knows how to support attention to meaning and prompt or question at a level appropriate for the child's current way of responding while also promoting new learning. Effective teachers are flexible in using different levels of questioning based upon the child's needs. Consider the level of support provided by the following questions from *Early Detection* (pp. 72-74):

#### Low Support:

"You made a mistake on that page. Can you find it?"

"Try that again. "

"Were you right?"

Higher Support:

"Does that look right?"
"Can we say it that way?"
"It could be but look at_____."
"Would ____ fit here?"
"Do you think it looks like ____?"

We have all seen a lesson in which a teacher provides a prompt that has no connection with the text. An extreme example involved a teacher who used the following question to prompt a student who had made the first sound of "cat" but had not said the word: "What do you have at home that goes 'meow'?" This prompting outside of the textual cues is known as **inducing the word**. It is an inefficient, teacher-dependent, non-progressive and perhaps even desperate form of prompting. One effective teacher gave herself this guideline for prompts: "Am I asking a question the child could ask himself at another time, at another difficulty and get good results for figuring it out?" The prompts "Do you know a word like that?" and "Do you know something that ends with those letters?" fit this teacher's criteria. "What do you have at home that goes meow?" has major limitations.

Effective teachers think deeply about what the student knows and what cues are available to produce the most effective prompt. They ask the student to respond with the highest level of independence possible by adjusting the level of support provided by their prompts as the child's skills change over time.

## Conclusions

Effective teachers are not only efficient in the pace of the lesson but they also understand the child's strengths and what the child needs to learn how to do; this knowledge brings focus to the learning in each lesson. Effective teachers also have a commitment to helping the student search for and use meaning as a primary source of cues and as the outcome of all reading and writing. They have keen observational and analytical skills which enable them to make intuitive decisions to help the student discover new learning, applying their strategic problem solving and develop a self-extending system. √√√

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# *Dual Processing in Reading: Don't "Get Your Mouth Ready" Yet*
## *Autumn 1994*

*by Noel Jones*
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On a recent visit I observed a Reading Recovery teacher, "Nelda," working with "Johnnie" (fictitious names) on the new book *Look for Me* (Wright Group, Level 5). Johnnie paused at the word 'him' and Nelda prompted, "Reread that line and get your mouth ready for the first letter." This episode was repeated three times on different words during the first reading of the book. However, I saw no evidence that this prompt was helpful to Johnnie. He continued to stop when he came to a hard word, and he really didn't seem to know what to do.

Nelda's lesson set me to thinking about many lessons I have observed recently. In my opinion the prompt, "Get your mouth ready" has become too common and is often used too early in a child's program. I wonder whether teachers might need to think more deeply about what they are asking children to do.

This procedure is introduced in *Reading Recovery: A Guidebook for Teachers in Training* (Clay, 1993), Section 10, "Linking Sound Sequences." Here Clay points out that children who would become efficient readers must learn how to: a) analyze spoken words into component sound elements when writing, and b) visually analyze printed words by using letters, letter clusters, and/or word parts while reading.

In addition, they must learn how to link these two capabilities in the process of reading for meaning on authentic or continuous text. One of the suggestions Clay makes under the heading, "If the child finds it hard to go from letters to sounds," is the following:

> When the child comes to a problem word in the text, sound the initial letter for him to help him to predict what the right word might be. Then transfer this sounding task to him by getting him to attend to the initial letter or letters and to get his mouth ready to say it. The aim is to make him more conscious of a strategy that will help him to eliminate the words that would fit the context but not the first letter cues.

This notion becomes very alluring to many teachers in training because they realize the importance for young readers of using letter sound cues as well as meaning and language structure while reading. Perhaps also their previous experience has given them a strong bias toward the use of letter sound cues.

Far too often the prompt, "Get your mouth ready," proves unsuccessful, and the teacher ends up telling the child the word or giving text-specific hints to induce the word. Often I observe that these same children pause and wait for help when they come to a problem word. My advice to these teachers is, "Don't 'Get your mouth ready' yet." Be careful not to overuse this prompt or use it prematurely. You may be asking children to do something hard before they've learned to do something easier that they need to bring under control first. This prompt suggests that children can predict a word based upon at least two considerations: the meaning of the story and the sound represented by an initial letter. Let's think about how the ability to do this might develop.

At the beginning of their program, children read patterned texts with supportive illustrations and they hear the teacher say the language pattern of the text during the book introduction. This combination of story meaning, recency in hearing the language, and supportive pictures guides the child towards cor-

rect responding. In a rather simple way, they are engaged in dual processing, based upon memory for language and direct picture support. It is a much more complex task for a child to try to use the first letter of a word plus the general meaning of the story and perhaps an illustration to generate a response that fits both the sound cues and the meaning cues. This requires finding a solution to a problem that simultaneously fits two different requirements.

How does a child develop the ability to do this? I suspect that there are at least two, probably overlapping, stages.

**First,** the child has to develop some confidence and control over generating a response that fits the meaning of the story or sentence. Teachers may think that this is easy, since they see many children who are quick to invent what they think the text might say. However, the task quickly becomes more difficult as the pictures become less supportive. The child is also learning how to monitor his/her reading based upon one-to-one matching and using known words. As the child learns to look at and use the print, he/she is more conscious of coming up with an appropriate word to fit a specific word-form in the text. Coming up with a meaningful substitution is an accomplishment that should not be overlooked or trivialized. Children need to know that this is what we want them to do; they need freedom to respond this way and they need supportive response: "I like the way you tried that." It is important that teachers value the child's problem solving attempts when they do not result in a correct response. It is the processing which is valued, not the accuracy.

**Second,** the child must learn how to cross-check a meaningful response against what is seen in the text. Cross-checking is a more sophisticated way of monitoring or checking on one's reading. To cross-check a meaningful response against its visual form, the child must check what he sees against what he might expect to see. There are probably several ways this could be done. The child might analyze the sound of the word he has just said, predict the letters he might see, and then compare them to the letters in the word he is looking at. Alternatively, he might remember something about the appearance of the word he has just said, and see that it does not look like the word in print. Other processing may have taken place. We cannot be sure what the child is thinking as they read text; we can only observe the behavior or response. In addition to the ability to judge whether the word they said fits the meaning of the text, cross-checking requires an attitude of checking on oneself while reading. Cross-checking meaningful predictions with visual information also requires some ability to hear sounds in words and associate them in letters.

Learning to cross-check one source of information against another takes time, and it takes even more practice to bring this operation under control so that focused, conscious attention is not needed. Teachers should be careful not to introduce cross-checking demonstrations or prompts in ways that discourage confident, meaningful substitutions.

I have grown to value the impulsive, rapid reading of young children as they respond to the full meaning of the text, still keeping some attention on monitoring based upon early strategies. These children can then be taught to cross-check on one or two carefully selected examples. After explicit demonstration and instruction, prompting for cross-checking can begin, but it should be limited to a few productive examples in each lesson. This means that some substitutions may go unchallenged. As the child develops control over this process, he/she begins to cross-check responses independently and rapidly, almost before they are out of the mouth. When this happens, he/she is on the way toward the more complicated problem-solving that we are looking for — coming up with just the right word that fits

both the meaning and the letters.

To help this capability develop and become part of a child's processing takes careful timing based upon close observation. There is an important procedure which is part of the early strategy prompts for helping children establish the basic concept of using the first letter along with other cue sources while they are reading. This is found under the heading "Locating one or two known words" on page 40 of the *Guidebook*. "Reread the page or sentence up to the known word-read-wrongly with fluent phrasing and stop, or, if you need to give more help, articulate the first sound of the problem word."

It is important to note that the problem word is a known word which has been read wrongly. Also note how much teacher support or demonstration is being provided at this early level. It is up to the teacher who is rereading the sentence to pull together the meaning and language structure to help the child predict the word. And, it is the teacher who sounds the first letter of the child's known but problematic word. This is a good example of two basic tenets of Reading Recovery instruction: begin with what the child knows before venturing out into new territory and teach by demonstration. Is this early, supportive strategy work laying the foundation for linking sound sequence with the letter sequence while reading text? I think the answer to this question is yes. Also stated on page 40 is an important caution to take into consideration: "Be careful not to establish a pattern where the child waits for the teacher to do the work … the child must learn that he must work at a difficulty, take some initiative, make some links."

I suspect that many children who are being prompted to "Get their mouth ready" too soon do not understand the task and/or are quite willing to wait for the teacher to do the work. They end up sitting and trying nothing or trying nothing successful as they work with problem words. This raises the question of when the teacher should begin to prompt children to use meaning and visual cues simultaneously while reading. Of course, there is never a clear answer to this question, but there are certain things to begin to take into account. I have suggested above the importance of generating meaningful responses fluently, making progress in hearing sounds in words and predicting letters one would expect to see, and learning to cross-check meaning and/or language cues against visual cues. These abilities probably develop simultaneously, but the teacher must watch to see that all are coming into play.

Another key consideration is what the child appears to be noticing. I don't mean to suggest that teaching should be dependent upon what the child wants to attend to. We must remember that our teaching moves should play a role in what the child notices and what he/she tries. But it is when we recognize what the child is trying to do or trying to figure out and we build our teaching moves upon these things that we are probably most effective. Mary Fried (Trainer, The Ohio State University) once advised me not to introduce the prompt: "Try that again and get your mouth ready to say that word." She suggested that it might be more powerful to see the child beginning to do that and say, "Oh, I liked the way you started to get your mouth ready to say that word." To me, that's an example of teaching to the child's notice.

A final point to keep in mind is part of Clay's admonition to give predominance to meaning. If the child is reading with some momentum and fluency and making meaningful substitutions, we say she is "reading at the text level." If she is stopping and puzzling over words and losing the meaning, we often say she is reading at the word level. If our prompts are to be effective, we must keep children reading at the text level, and while they do so, we must help them become better and better about taking visual cues into account as they read.

What I'm suggesting here is that we need

to be careful in our prompting for use of visual information. We can easily lead children to try to work at the word level. We also need to remember that children don't learn to read by consciously applying the rules that we give them, like "Get your mouth ready for the first letter," any more than they read by applying phonics rules. Attending to the visual form of the word while thinking of the meaning is an important part of the searching strategy that promotes the development of a child's self-extending system. It is something that the child must use and control almost at an unconscious level. We need to direct our prompts and demonstrations to what the child seems to be noticing and help him/her make connections between knowledge we think he/she has in one area such as writing or reading to problem solving in other areas. If we teach in this way, which Clay calls "'following the child," then we are promoting strategies which work in a generative way for children and which enable them to learn more about print, about language, and about reading every time they read. √√√

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## *Reading Recovery and Phonics: A Response for Parents Autumn 1994*

*by Steve Hansell*
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***Editor's Note: In our work as Reading Recovery teachers, we have many contacts with parents who are concerned about their child's progress in learning to read and are willing to do what they can to help. Many parents who have been saturated with media advertisements on how easy it is to learn to read through "phonics" ask questions about Reading Recovery and phonics instruction. At the Wright State University site, teacher leaders have taken a proactive stance by sending out information to parents before the questions are even asked. The following Wright State information sheet for parents may help you to respond to the "phonics" questions. An article titled " The Profits of Reading: Is Hooked on Phonics really worth the cost?" was featured in the education section of Newsweek magazine on May 20, 1991. This article would also be useful for teachers and teacher leaders who are often asked "phonics" questions.***

### Information letter for parents:

Newspapers and magazines love arguments. In education, a favorite argument is how to teach children to learn to read. Many people—and now advertisers who are making millions of dollars—think that "phonics" is the best way to teach students to read. This argument is very logical. The difference between speaking and reading is print. When print can be related to sounds in words, people can read.

However, helping a child who has difficulty reading to relate print and sounds is not easy. Furthermore, even the strongest proponents of phonics instruction, Jean Chall of Harvard University, and Benita Blachman of Syracuse University, agree that "no one has suggested that these activities provide a complete diet or encompass the child's entire day. Ideally, one would want [phonics] activities to be incorporated into a classroom where storybook reading was commonplace, oral language experiences were valued, basic concepts about print (e.g., how to hold a book) and the function of reading and writing were developed, and children had opportunities both to talk and to write about their experiences … ." (Blachman, *Topics in Language Disorders*, 1991.)

Blachman also says: "In planning a program for young children … it makes sense to start with language games that do not involve written symbols." In other words, there is a step with oral language that comes before being able to match a letter with a sound.

In Reading Recovery, we test what your child knows about letters and how they are used to represent sounds before we begin teaching. We work with your child to learn the names of letters and to ensure he/she understands letters are used. Each day as we write, we ask your child to say words slowly that he or she doesn't know. We ask him/her to push a marker for each sound in the word. As soon as he/she knows some letter sounds, we ask him/her to name the letter or write the letter that makes that sound. We create alphabet books to represent known letters and pictures that have the same beginning sound. We create letter books with many pictures and words that begin with the same letter. We use magnetic letters to help draw your child's attention to letter patterns in words (such as cat/mat,

got/get). Finally, we ask your child to use what we know he or she knows about words to figure out unfamiliar words in books.

However, we do not require your child to sound out every word letter by letter. Based on the research of Marie Clay, we ask your child to read many simple books and use all the cues that are available to him or her. We know that the flow of the sentence and the first sound often let your child figure out phonetically irregular words such as have, was, and were. We know that pictures help your child figure out long words such as *elephant*, *crocodile*, and *banana*.

We know that when we select books carefully, your child enjoys the challenge of figuring out words by:

1. *Checking the pictures.*
2. *Rereading the sentence.*
3. *Using the beginning letter/sound.*
4. *Using the spelling pattern of the word, and*
5. *Checking the attempt by saying the word slowly and looking at the letters to see if they match.*

We also have test scores to show that 90 percent or more of the students we have worked with over the past 8 years in Reading Recovery have learned to read as well as the average of the class.

So, we ask your support. Instead of saying "sound it out" each time your child stops or mispronounces a word as he or she reads, please ask questions such as:

- *Does that (or what would) make sense?*
- *Does that sound right? (Does the sentence flow smoothly?)*
- *Does that look right?*

If the questions don't produce the expected results, tell your child the word and continue to enjoy the book together.

If you want to help your child with phonics, too, that's fine. Some enjoyable ways to do this include:

1. *Searching the room or pictures in a magazine or catalog. Name all the things that begin with a specific sound. Take turns finding and naming the objects.*
2. *Reading books that appeal to your child. Talk about the letters; how are they the same? How are they different?*
3. *Playing games in the car to give words that rhyme or have the same beginning sound.*
4. *Encouraging your child to write notes to friends and family. Rather than insisting on correct spelling, encourage him/her to say the word slowly and write down any letters for sounds he/she can hear.*
5. *Reading and enjoying books together.*

We thank you for your concern and help.
√√√

# What Does Teaching at the Word Level Really Mean?
## Winter 1994

*Rose Mary Estice, Trainer*
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When you discuss Reading Recovery lessons behind the glass or during school visits, do you talk about whether the teaching was at the word level or the strategy level? I have heard teacher leaders pose this question, and it is a critical issue. We certainly want our teaching to facilitate the use of strategies and not be focused on the learning of individual items or words. As a teacher leader you might be talking about how word level teaching is ineffective and does not promote accelerative learning based on reading strategically. As a teacher you are trying hard not to teach at the word level and I couldn't agree more. But what does teaching at the word level really mean?

I recently asked a group of Reading Recovery teachers to provide examples of teaching at the word level. Their responses included asking the child to find a word, calling the child's attention to a word (maybe by asking what letter s/he would expect to see at the beginning), and pointing out the visual discrepancies between two words. These examples involve words, but they are not necessarily examples of teaching at the word level. Understanding why this is so requires an understanding of what is — and what is not — teaching for strategies.

### Teaching for Strategies

Teaching for strategies facilitates the child's use of strategies on another day or on another book. The in-the-head problem solving that the child learns to do is generative to another situation. S/he can ask self-regulatory questions to aid in the use of strategies. If you think about some of the strategy prompts recommended, it is easy to see how they are generative to another situation and how they can become the child's own language. "Look at the picture" or "Would that make sense?" are simple illustrations of strategy level prompts that can become self-regulatory language for the child in time. You would probably agree that "Did you run out of words?" or "Did that match?" are strategy level prompts that the child could eventually ask her/himself. The higher level prompts "Try that again and think about what makes sense … sounds right … looks right" are also clear examples of strategy prompts that are generative to another day or another book and are prompts the child can eventually ask her/himself. We must remember that teaching for strategies involves teaching the child to read, not teaching the child to read a specific book. Empowering the child with the use of these strategies on other days and on other books is what makes the process so effective.

### Word Level Teaching

Word level teaching, in contrast to strategy level teaching, is not generative to another day or another book. It is directed to the learning of a specific word to read a particular book. It does not foster the use of problem-solving operations or strategies while reading. The goal seems to be to "get the word right." The product rather than the process appears to drive the teaching.

One example of word level teaching is inducing the word, as in the prompt, "What color is your shirt? That's the word in your story!" This prompt will not help the child on

another book and is not a question she could eventually ask herself (unless she already knew the word). The prompt does not foster independent problem solving and does not help the child learn new strategies to use in reading. Other examples of word level teaching include attention to particular words without any concern for the process or how that information could be used to problem solve at another time. Using magnetic letters to teach the word "along" so the child can read *Along Comes Jake* and knocking on the table as Sam gets ready to knock on the door in *Sam's Mask* to elicit the word "knocked" are specific examples of a concern for the word and for accuracy, rather than for the in-the-head problem solving that could eventually become self-regulatory.

### Using Prompts to Search for Visual Information

Keeping in mind our distinction between word and strategy level teaching, we can return to the teacher examples listed in paragraph two. While it is true the teacher is calling attention to a specific word when asking the child to locate a word, the prompt is strategic in that it encourages the child to look at the print and use the visual information to help herself.

Children will not learn to read if they don't understand they have to use the visual information on the page. Helping them learn this important understanding is part of the teaching we do early on ("Locating one or two known words"). Note what Clay says on page 40 of *Reading Recovery: A Guidebook for Teachers in Training* under "Locating one or two known words":

> On the earliest reading books begin to encourage the child's attention to particular words in continuous text by focusing on the words which he knows in any context — home, community, classroom or Reading Recovery.

She then provides us with specific prompts to use which foster the child's attention to the print. Remember that these prompts are in the "Teaching for Strategies" section of the *Reading Recovery Guidebook* and are at the strategy level, not the word level, because the understanding of the importance of looking at the print is what is to be learned, not necessarily the specific word. However, knowledge of a few words gives the child a way to check on her/himself at this very early stage, and, of course, checking or monitoring is a critical strategy to be used in reading at any level of competence. Clay states on page 40 of the *Guidebook* under "Checking on oneself or self-monitoring,"

> The successful reader who is making no errors is monitoring his reading at all times. Effective monitoring is a highly skilled process constructed over many years of reading. It begins early but must be continually adapted to encompass new challenges in texts.

Locating one or two known words is also generative because the child can begin to notice words s/he knows in other books and on other days. The purpose is to help the child understand that the print on the page plays an important role in reading books and that the words can be a way of checking.

If we look in the *Guidebook* for the prompt "What do you expect to see at the beginning?", we would also find it in the "Teaching for Strategies" section. That's the first indication that it is not a word level prompt. You'll find it on page 41 under "Checking on oneself or self-monitoring." Using it will help the child learn to check on her/his reading in a very specific way: by checking what the word looks like. Yes, the child is attending to a particular word in order to do this checking, but the checking is what is important. The word is important only in providing a clear example. This kind of prompting teaches the child to monitor in particular ways; it does not teach the word and so is not a word level prompt.

The last teacher example of a word level prompt was pointing out the visual discrepan-

cies between words. Once again, the mentioned prompt can be found in the "Teaching for Strategies" section of the *Guidebook*. This time it is under "Cross-checking information" on page 41:

> When the child can monitor his own reading and can search for and use structure or message or sound cues or visual cues, begin to encourage him to check one kind of cue against another. The teacher can point up discrepancies — 'It could be … but look at … .'

The teacher is drawing the child's attention to the visual discrepancies between her/his substitution and the word on the page, but only as a way to teach the child to check one kind of cue against another. The purpose is not to teach the word, but to teach for the strategy of cross-checking information.

While reflecting on these responses to my questions about word level teaching, I realized that prompts for the child to use visual cues or information were being confused with word level teaching. As shown by the previous references to the *Reading Recovery Guidebook*, these prompts are clearly suggested and intended to foster the use of strategies. Are these being identified behind the glass and during school visits as word level prompts and consequently being given a bad rap? I would ask that Reading Recovery teachers and teacher leaders alike reflect on this possibility, as I have observed it on a number of occasions when working with Reading Recovery colleagues.

On page 287 of *Becoming Literate*, Clay writes,

> Visual perception of textual features is certainly part of the inner processing system from which the reader generates reading behaviors. The beginning reader has to give attention to visual information as well as the language and messages but gradually becomes able to use visual information without much conscious attention, freeing more attention for the system.

Reading Recovery teachers need to understand how to teach for strategies and to use the prompts in the *Guidebook* to facilitate problem solving on the child's part. It is critical that the children take the initiative to problem solve and that the teacher foster that process and not get in the way of it. It is critical that the Reading Recovery teacher understand the relationship between items and strategies, as there is a place for both in learning to read. Clay expresses this clearly on page 331 in *Becoming Literate*:

> Knowledge of a few items plus a usable strategy will help one go beyond the information that is already stored in the head and allow one to respond correctly to another novel item. A few items and a powerful strategy might make it very easy to learn a great deal more.

I would like to suggest that you try to think about a few items and a powerful strategy instead of word level or strategy level teaching as you discuss Reading Recovery lessons and as you reflect upon your own teaching. This stance may be less confusing and represents better how emerging readers take on the process of reading. √√√

## *Doing It by the Book ... or, Using the Language of the Guidebook in Our Teaching Winter 1995*

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We know the power of language when we meet fellow Reading Recovery professionals for the first time, perhaps at a conference, and immediately discover a commonality in the ideas and observations we share. We talk about strategies, cueing sources, acceleration, discontinuing, "going to visual," and so on, and we develop an immediate kinship on the basis of our shared experience in Reading Recovery. Literally, we are "speaking the same language!" That bond is established through the powerful medium of language, and it is that same powerful medium that characterizes our interaction with the children we teach in Reading Recovery.

Reading Recovery lessons represent an intense level of interaction with individual children, and our language during lessons serves different purposes. For instance, one purpose, especially with English language learners, is to create opportunities for children to produce language in order to extend their oral language competence. The natural conversational style that invites participation by the child supports and offers opportunities for language use. Similarly, language that we use in other parts of the lesson, such as the introduction to the new book, may be fairly open-ended in terms of sharing the ideas of the story and allowing the children's responses to guide our further conversations with them.

In training both Reading Recovery teachers and teacher leaders, I have given considerable thought to the various roles that language plays in Reading Recovery lessons. One of those roles, the subject of this article, is directing children's attention to specific problem-solving situations which they encounter while reading continuous text. It is in the context of problem-solving at points of difficulty that children develop strategies that they can later initiate for themselves. Our language interaction with children at these points of problem-solving is crucial to children's development of independent processing.

In *Reading Recovery: A Guidebook for Teachers in Training*, Clay provides exact wording for verbal prompts which tend to strengthen children's independent problem solving. Most of these prompts are located in Section 9, "Teaching for strategies," Section 10, "Linking sound sequence with letter sequence," and Section 11, "Taking words apart in reading." The following examples of prompts from these various sections all call for independent responding on the part of the child: "Were you right?", "Check to see if what you read looks right and sounds right to you," and "Do you know a word like that?" These examples can be called "prompts for problem solving."

Clarity, careful wording, and a call for independent action by the child characterize the language of the *Guidebook*. The verbal prompts provided for our use in the *Guidebook* need to become a natural, albeit learned, part of our interaction with children. In this article, I will present a "case" for incorporating the specific language of the *Guidebook* into our verbal interactions with children at those points in lessons when we are selecting a teaching point for a particular child (e.g., after the running record) or when we are prompting chil-

dren for strategy use at a point of difficulty during text reading. I propose a four-point rationale for incorporating "prompts for problem-solving," as provided in the *Guidebook*, into our teaching as a critical element of effective and powerful lessons for children. After considering these various points, I turn to a short description of how teachers work to incorporate the language of the *Guidebook* into their teaching.

**1. The *Guidebook* prompts direct attention in a way that is strategy-oriented.** This first point of the rationale is significant for two reasons. First, Clay has defined a self-extending system for literacy as "... a set of behaviours which lead the child to control more difficult texts merely because he reads them. The important components of a self-improving system are the in-the-head strategies which the child initiates ..." (Clay, 1993, p. 61). In Reading Recovery, it is incumbent upon the teacher to "... deliberately focus the child's attention on such processing strategies" (Clay, 1993, p. 61). Clay has described something that Reading Recovery teachers try to do in every lesson, that is teaching for the strategies that create a self-extending system. Opportunities to teach for strategies occur as children encounter situations for problem-solving as they read text on just the right level of difficulty.

The deliberate effort to focus children's attention on strategies for problem-solving is best accomplished through language that requires children to respond strategically, i.e., to take an action to initiate problem-solving. The prompts in the *Guidebook* provide opportunities for growth toward self-extending systems of the children. A close reading of the *Guidebook* reveals that many prompts are in question form ("Did that match?"), some are statements ("Try that again."), and some are non-verbal ("The teacher divides the word in print with finger or masking card.")

A second point about the *Guidebook* prompts being strategy-oriented relates to the background of teaching experience that all of us bring to Reading Recovery training. If, for example, we have learned to focus on students' deficits or have spent most of our instructional time working on items, the shifts demanded by Reading Recovery are difficult. It is easy to revert to old language and old ways when learning a complex new way of thinking about children and about teaching. By setting a goal of using language that directs children's attention to problem-solving opportunities, teachers are assisting themselves to make the shifts in their thinking that effective Reading Recovery teaching requires.

New thinking is reflected in new language; new language facilitates new thinking.

**2. Using the language of the *Guidebook* has potential for revealing to children ways of thinking about reading.** The teacher's speech is a model for potential self-talk that children can use in self-regulating ways. All language with children has that potential to the extent that children construct the meanings of messages for themselves (Tharpe & Gallimore, 1989). In Reading Recovery, the use of clear, strategy-oriented prompts can enable children to take action to construct meaning, and, ultimately, to remind themselves of potential action, incorporating self-regulating speech into their thinking related to literacy.

Internalization of a repertoire of strategic action does not occur as a direct transfer of exact language into their minds but as a result of being given opportunities to understand and apply problem-solving language in new situations for themselves during text reading. The goal for children is "guided reinvention" (Tharpe & Gallimore, 1989) of a new principle or generalization (such as how to apply a strategy) which was initially introduced in a social setting. Our interactions with Reading Recovery children during tutorial lessons represent a powerful context in which to model new thinking, and provide opportunities for apply-

ing it, so that they can eventually internalize it as their own.

Clay talks about selecting the "...clearest, easiest, most memorable examples with which to establish a new response..." (1993, p. 8). If we conceive of children's development of thought about literacy as a new response, then the clearest, most memorable examples to enable its development may be the particular prompts of the guidebook, used consistently and appropriately when selecting teaching points.

The self-talk I am describing here is one that we must infer is occurring as we observe shifts in the child's responding. Clay cautions not to demand that the child verbalize self-regulatory talk: "It seems legitimate to encourage a child to verbalize a strategy or a principle or a rule-like consistency because these have...generative value...*It is a tactic that could be overworked and could interfere with the automatic responding that goes with fluency*" (Clay, 1993, p. 43). The value of using the specific language of the *Guidebook* for developing children's self-talk is not that children can talk to us about what they are doing, but that they hear, understand, and acquire language that will become self-regulatory as one aspect of their developing inner control of literacy.

It is difficult to overestimate the influence of what we say to children and its possible influence upon their thinking, especially when we are working with them in a tutorial setting. The power of teacher talk is evident in this Reading Recovery teacher's experience. The lesson was over; the child had selected several books to take home and had put them in her book bag. Before the teacher left the room to walk the child back to her classroom, the telephone rang and the teacher answered it. During the telephone conversation, the child took her books out of the bag and started reading them out loud. The teacher could hear the child audibly saying, "Does that sound right?" and then, "Good. You went back and fixed it up."

This was a banner day for that child, because she had learned a little more about regulating her own reading by taking on the language that the teacher had used during the lesson. In this situation, the child was spontaneously verbalizing her inner speech, even though during the lesson the teacher had not asked her to talk about her strategies. The child was extending her inner control of literacy through new self-talk which was observable in this unusual, impromptu situation.

**3. The prompts of the *Guidebook* represent one of the outcomes of several years of program development.** In the research studies reported by Clay (1979, 1993), she describes four years of field testing that resulted in the final form of procedures as first used in the Reading Recovery program in New Zealand. As part of that description she states, "A large number of techniques were piloted, observed, discussed, argued over, related to theory, analyzed, written up, modified and tried out in various ways, and, most important, many were discarded... Thus the procedures were derived from the responses of experienced teachers to children as they tried to read and write. The process of refinement continued over the next three years, as several drafts of the teaching procedures were written, discussed and edited by the teachers..." (Clay, 1993, p. 61.)

This description of the process of field-testing emphasizes the high level of teacher involvement in the development of Reading Recovery procedures. Those procedures became the basis of the Reading Recovery program that yielded the outstanding results of the first research studies in New Zealand. Although the prompts of the *Guidebook* were not a focus of those research studies, from the several years of development and refinement of Reading Recovery, Clay selected prompts that were efficient and worked well on the basis of careful observation and analysis of interactions between teachers and children. Clay and her

research team critically examined each suggested prompt to be sure it had maximum potential for communicating clearly, suggesting strategy action, and not proliferating teacher talk. Since the original years of development, Reading Recovery procedures have been updated (Clay, 1993), and their effectiveness continues to be available to us through the *Guidebook* language as we implement the procedures in our lessons.

**4. Using the language of the *Guidebook* will help minimize extraneous teacher talk.** Because the wording of the *Guidebook* is succinct and concise, using the prompts helps to control a tendency toward wordiness when teaching. Consider the simple, "Did it match?" or "Does it look right?" in terms of efficiency and economy of words. Left to our own way of directing the child's attention, it is easy to use too many words for the intended message, thereby creating an unnecessary barrage of verbal information for the child. Monitoring and minimizing our level of verbiage also can contribute to the goal of increasing children's activity levels during lessons.

Teachers can gain a great deal of insight into their use of language by audio taping one or more of their lessons. By listening to and recording what they are saying to children and how they are saying it, teachers can compare the level of teacher talk to student talk, the appropriateness of their prompting to the behavior of the child, as well as check on how much of the language of the *Guidebook* they are actually using in their teaching.

How does taking on this new language to prompt effectively for problem-solving happen? Taking on new understandings and new language is a gradual process as we acquire experience in teaching Reading Recovery children. Early in training, teachers may use props (such as cards with the prompts written on them) or teach with the *Guidebook* open so that they can "try on" the language. This will provide a feeling for the full power of the *Guidebook* language. Even though at first, new Reading Recovery teachers may not use the prompts appropriately at times, continued effort to use them will result in instances of powerful teaching which will become more frequent as the language becomes internalized and available "on demand" for individual children.

A guiding principle is that the *Guidebook* needs to be used with a particular child in mind. This principle extends to using the language of the verbal prompts for problem-solving that the *Guidebook* provides. To get a shift in a child's processing, a teacher might have the *Guidebook* handy, ready to refer to right before the lesson or in thinking about the next lesson. Some teachers take this a step farther during the lesson-planning process. They consider their strategy-level instructional focus for an individual child, and as they prepare the lesson, they write some of the specific prompts from the *Guidebook* that relate to their instructional focus on their lesson record form. Perhaps just the writing-out process helps them to become more aware of the possible prompts to use with the child and helps to acquire more "ease" with the language of the *Guidebook*.

The most sophisticated effort I have observed of a teacher's attempt to take on the *Guidebook* language was a teacher who had a small three-ring notebook, tabbed and divided into various categories by strategy. In each section were cards on which she had type-written the prompts from the *Guidebook*. As she taught her lesson, she tabbed to the section needed for prompting an individual child at any given point and easily retrieved the appropriate language to use.

Learning the language of the *Guidebook* prompts is an important goal for teachers, as I have outlined above. However, other refinements to the use of prompts are equally important as teachers develop greater teaching expertise. As they work with learning the language, teachers also will need to consider which of the prompts for a given strategy are

appropriate for a particular child in relationship to their progress in the program. The *Guidebook* prompts range from very supportive prompting, such as, "Did you run out of words?" for attending to one-to-one correspondence, to "Try that again." The latter prompt requires a higher level of self-monitoring from the child than the first prompt. Selecting the level of prompt for the level of support each child requires is a critically important goal as teachers take on the language of the *Guidebook*.

Another important refinement is attending to how the child is responding to our prompts. The child may be unable to take the action called for if our prompt is too broad, or, as we sometimes say "high level", as in the example of, "Try that again." In that situation, we need to change to a more supportive and specific prompt. Additionally, prompting children is only the beginning of a process by which they "reinvent" the meaning of prompts for themselves. As Reading Recovery teachers, our careful observation of children's behavior must also be focused on the extent to which they understand our prompts in terms of eliciting new behavior as they perform literacy tasks.

All of the ideas above with respect to using the language of the *Guidebook* implies a process of moving from initial unfamiliarity and awkwardness, to a working knowledge of possible responses to children's behavior, to a final internalization of the range of prompts that are available as we teach. Experienced teachers will have internalized the *Guidebook* prompts; they will be able to access the appropriate level of prompt for individual children; and, they will monitor the extent to which the prompts they are using are enabling shifts in children's behavior. But these abilities only accrue over time as the total number of children teachers have taught increases and as they continue to work to develop their expertise. Clay cautions in the preface of *Reading Recovery: A Guidebook for Teachers in Training* (1993), "Reading Recovery teachers need special training to make superbly sensitive decisions about how to interact with the responses of the hard-to-teach child. This book provides the conceptualisation of how and why the programme is the way it is, and it puts the main procedures into a text to be read. But how the teacher makes these procedures work for the individual learner with unusual patterns of responding or with limited expertise in necessary aspects of the task is something that defies recording in a linear script of words."

All of the new language we learn in Reading Recovery reflects a new understanding of the reading process and how children acquire independence in reading and writing. The specific prompts for problem-solving provided for our use in the *Guidebook* represent a powerful means of enabling children to achieve the acceleration that is the goal of Reading Recovery intervention. Setting a priority of using these *Guidebook* prompts at appropriate problem-solving points in our lessons; thinking about the prompts in relationship to individual children while teaching; carefully observing how children are responding to prompts — these are aspects of developing our expertise in teaching for strategies in Reading Recovery lessons. The beginning point for this complex, but exciting, process is setting ourselves the goal of doing it by the book. √√√

## References

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# *Using Patterns of Responding to "Follow the Child"*
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***"With problem readers it is not enough for the teacher to have rapport, to generate interesting tasks and generally to be a good teacher. The teacher must be able to design a superbly sequenced programme determined by the child's performance, and to make highly skilled decisions moment by moment during the lesson" (Clay, 1993b, p. 9).***

Reading Recovery teachers can determine "the child's literacy performance" by using patterns of responding, that is, what the child mostly does in reading and writing. The child's performance informs the teaching, and close observation is the key to being able to "follow the child."

In Reading Recovery training classes, continuing contact sessions, and other professional development opportunities, teachers often talk of "following the child." Certainly that concept is appropriate in Reading Recovery, an individualized program which builds on the child's specific strengths. However, teachers need to have a clear understanding of what "following the child" means.

For example, "following the child" is not following the child to ineffective responses. If the child's only attempt at unknown words is to sound them out or to skip them, the teacher would not ignore these ineffective behaviors; rather, she would provide the child with alternative behaviors. "Following the child" does not mean following him/her to a dead end. If the child generates only short, safe stories, learning opportunities are very limited. Instead, the teacher would assist in extending the original story or engaging the child in genuine conversations that results in more interesting and complex stories.

Similarly, "following the child" does not mean allowing unlimited free choice in selecting familiar books to read. If the child continues to choose books that are so easy he/she doesn't have to look at the print, or those that are not familiar enough to provide opportunities to read fluently with phrasing, the teacher would remove those books from the ones to be selected. The teacher would provide choices by carefully pre-selecting those books that best provide practice for orchestrating the range of strategies the child controls and then allow the child to choose from those.

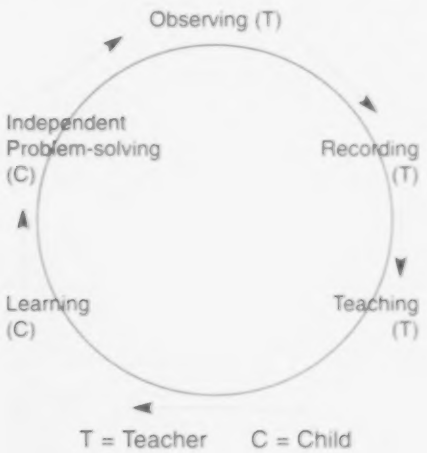
In "following the child," the Reading Recovery teacher thinks beyond the word or book to be read or the story to be written. The teacher will make decisions based on the child's current ways of responding and provide opportunities for this child to learn.

## The Role of Observation

Observation is central to the idea of "following the child." One of the assumptions upon which Clay founded Reading Recovery is, "... that a programme for a child having difficulty learning to read should be based on a detailed observation of that child as a reader and a writer, with particular attention to what that child can do. The programme will work out of these strengths and not waste time teaching anything already known" (Clay, 1993b, p. 7). In other words, "following the child" means observing what the child can do, determining what the child needs to learn to do, and providing appropriate learning opportunities.

Clearly, recording observations on instructional records is critical. If the teacher does not

have good records of her observations, it will be difficult to "follow the child." Additionally, thorough analysis of the records is important. Careful thinking about what the child is mostly doing, and neglecting to do, will enable the teacher to make good decisions for teaching on the run and for subsequent teaching. An on-going analysis of records is necessary as shifts in learning are recorded; this leads to shifts in teaching, since the teacher must always ask herself, "What next does this child need to learn?" The on-going process that leads to shifts in both teaching and learning over time might be viewed as the teacher observing, recording, and teaching, and the child learning, and independently problem-solving (see figure on the below).




The teacher observes the child reading and writing, and she records the child's behavior on the lesson records. From these recorded observations, the teacher determines her teaching priorities and teaches for strategies. The child responds to the teaching and at first may inconsistently apply the new learning but, given more opportunities, the new problem-solving behavior becomes independent; that is, the child uses strategies to problem-solve without prompts from the teacher.

Behaviors related to this shift in learning are observed and recorded and the teacher again considers what the child can do and what he/she needs to learn to do next in order to determine subsequent teaching priorities. This diagram illustrates the essential process but is not intended to over-simplify what happens over time. The process is not necessarily always in one direction; however, the diagram may be useful in supporting conversations about shifts in teaching and learning.

According to Clay, "What the teacher will do is set some priorities as to which kinds of new learning she will attend to--just one or two things--and let the other behaviours that were incorrect go unattended at this time" (Clay, 1993b, p.15). How does the teacher use all of her observations to come up with just a few priorities? The answer to that question may be found in the title, "Using Patterns of Responding to 'Follow the Child.'"

## Observing and using patterns of responding

Patterns of responding are simply what the child mostly does. Priorities in teaching need to impact the child's current way of responding, what he/she usually does at difficulty or at error. It is not helpful to teach to what happens only occasionally or to what is under control with an occasional lapse. It is not helpful to talk only about self-corrections. To really make a difference in a child's problem-solving, the teacher will attend to the major patterns of responding, not to the exceptions. In addition, the teacher will attend to the child's processing and not just to helping the child get the word right.

The teacher will look for patterns of responding across the lesson to inform her teaching. Here, I will use running records to explore the concept in some depth, since it is in the running records that patterns of responding are most easily seen. Clay states that we can infer from the child's errors, self-corrections and comments much of what

he/she is attending to. The learning work is captured in a running record (Clay, 1993).

In order to see a pattern of responding, every error and self-correction must be analyzed. A true picture of the child as a reader is not possible without a complete analysis. After all the errors are analyzed, patterns of how the cues are used and neglected can be determined. Additionally, the teacher may notice patterns such as re-reading to problem-solve, appealing for help, checking to confirm, and the monitoring of errors without actually solving them. Such patterns of behavior, too, can inform the teaching.

Clay suggests that the running record be checked to detect processing problems and other potential learning points (Clay 1993b). The running records below provide examples of patterns of responses that inform the teaching priorities, in particular the child's processing problems.

### What the child can do

Nicholas, the reader of *One Sock, Two Socks* (Running Record #1) can sometimes make all the cues match and sometimes search for further visual information to self-correct after using some visual information in the first attempt. He can monitor many of his errors and often attempts an unknown word by sounding the initial letter. (Nicholas also cross-checked on cues once and corrected both an insertion and an omission. These behaviors indicate low-level kinds of processing that are essentially under control, infrequent, and self-reinforcing for the child; there is no need to attend to them or even to note them.)

### What the child needs to learn to do

Nicholas needs to initiate problem-solving beyond sounding the first letter when he comes to difficulty rather than waiting for a told. Specifically, he needs to learn to think about the story and re-read in order to search for meaning and structure cues. (Nicholas also needs to use more than the initial letter to problem-solve increasingly complex text; however, the passive mode of waiting for tolds is so critical that full attention is needed to get a shift there first.)

### Analysis of errors and self-corrections

The summary at the top of this running record contains the following information:

- Mostly uses visual information, often just the first letter
- Some making the cues match (msv)
- Some searching further visual information to self correct
- Neglecting meaning and structure at difficulty.

### Pattern of Responding

Nicholas consistently articulated the first sound of unknown words and waited for tolds: seven/nine errors were tolds.

### Learning Opportunities

The processing problem here is of great concern because Nicholas is not often initiating problem-solving beyond articulating the sound of the first letter of the unknown word. The roles of the teacher and the child are clear. "I'll just try the first letter and then the teacher will help me." When writing about early reading behaviors, Clay stresses that the child must initiate reading work: "Be careful not to establish a pattern where the child waits for the teacher to do the work. This is the point at which the child must learn that he must work at difficulty, take some initiative, make some links. It is the general principle that needs to be established at this time and it does not matter which types of cues the child uses" (Clay, 1993b, p. 40).

The initiating of reading work should have been long established, but it is apparent from Nicholas' reading behavior that this pattern needs to be established or re-established now. The teacher will need to select the clearest, easiest, most memorable examples with which to establish the new response (Clay, 1993b). In

**Running Record #1** **One Sock, Two Socks** **Level 12**
**Nicholas** **93% sc 1:3**

One Sock, Two Socks Level 12

**Pg 2** √ √ going _ r- √ √
Tim was getting ready T for school

**Pg 3** Accurate Reading

**Pg 4** √ √ started √ √ √ √ √ √
Then he stopped to play with his toy car

**Pg 5** Accurate Reading

**Pg 6** √ did sc √ √ √
Tim didn't like to hurry

√ √ √ √ - sc √ R
He put on his blue pants

√ √ √ √ √
He played with his car

**Pg 7** √ √ √ √ √
Tick - tock said the clock

√ √ √ mom sc
Hurry said his mother

**Pg 8** Accurate Reading

**Pg 9** Accurate Reading . . .
√ played A p- √ √
He pulled - T and pulled

**Pg 10** √ √ √ t- A t-
It made him tired - T

√ A √ √ √ √ √
He pushed - T his car on the bed

Accurate Reading . . .

**Pg 11** s- √ √ √ √ √ √
Soon - T it will be time to go

√ √
to school

Accurate Reading . . .

**Pg 12** √ √ under sc the sc R
It wasn't there -

√ √ √ a- √ √
He looked all around T No sock

√ √ A u- √ √
He looked under - T his bed

√ √
No sock

**Pg 13** Accurate Reading

this case, the new response is thinking about the story and re-reading at point of difficulty. Nicholas must initiate searching for cues and use more than a single source of information. "Children who fail to search also fail to learn how to use cues effectively and do not develop error-correction techniques" (Clay, 1991, p. 299).

After the running record, Nicholas' teacher can focus on searching for cues at point of difficulty in order to address this child's processing problem; it will be important to select powerful examples. Page 12 seems to be a good place to return to because the picture supports the meaning and the child achieved a stretch of accurate reading up to the errors. While the unknown words were told during the running record (the most neutral response on the teacher's part), the point to be made after the running record is what to do the next time there is a tricky part. "What word did I help you with on this page? Try it again and if you get stuck, think about what is happening in the story and start over."

Prompting consistently for initiation of problem-solving on both the running record books and the new books for the next few days will help Nicholas move toward independent problem-solving. "Every time you get stuck, don't just sit and wait. Think about the story and quickly go back to the beginning."

Teachers may be tempted to return to *going/getting*, *started/stopped*, or *played/pulled* to try for self-correction. These examples represent good attempts up to the error and demonstrate that Nicholas can use more than the visual information. The priority, however, must be on the bigger pattern of not initiating problem-solving beyond sounding the first letter and not incorporating re-reading as a way to search for meaning and structure, ways of processing that may hinder the child's progress.

The self-corrections were easy ones for Nicholas and illustrate the kinds of processing that are independent and thus self-reinforcing:

> The child reading to himself knows when he is more or less correct because 'one of the beautiful advantages of reading sense is that it provides its own feedback' (Smith, 1978). One way to describe this independence is that the child has learned how to work out new parts of messages for himself. He finds this activity rewarding. Once the child learns to search for cues to a word the reinforcement lies within the reading process, in the agreement he can achieve between all those signals and messages in the code. He no longer needs as much outside help to confirm whether his response is right or wrong. The activity of making all the cues fit, which is the challenge of the task, and eliminating any misfit, is rewarding to the child who succeeds. (Clay, 1991, p. 254).

**Running Record #2** **Rosie At The Zoo** **Level 13**
**Brittany** **93% sc 1:5**

Rosie At the Zoo Level 13

**Pg 2** Accurate Reading . . .

monkey
Let's go and see the monkeys

Accurate Reading . . .

**Pg 3**
We lifted Rosie up.

see
I like monkeys said Rosie

lion
Let's go and see the lions

Accurate Reading . . .

**Pg 4**
We lifted Rosie up

She looked at the lion

And R sc
It walked up and down

Accurate Reading . . .

**Pg 5** Accurate Reading . . .

did dude R cried
I don't T like lions she said

**Pg 6** Accurate Reading . . .

she R sc
and said me too me too

**Pg 7** Accurate Reading . . .

**Pg 8** Accurate Reading . . .

this thing
It lifted up its trunk

WOOOOSH T

Accurate Reading . . .

sorry wash
But you did get a shower

## What the child can do

Brittany can use all three cueing sources and mostly makes them match. She rereads to self-correct, to confirm, and after a told. She can make multiple attempts at difficulty.

## What the child needs to learn to do

Brittany needs to learn to monitor errors in which there are visual mismatches of final or medial letters. In order to self-correct errors, she needs to learn to search for further visual information (final or medial letters) after making all the cues match in the initial attempt.

## Analysis of errors and self-corrections

The summary at the top of this running record contains the following information:

- Using all three cues and mostly making them match
- Neglecting final letters as visual cues.

## Pattern of Responding

Consistently Brittany used all three

cues in an integrated way to read this text. She did not notice errors that fit all cues but were a mismatch visually in terms of the final letters.

### Learning Opportunities

To read increasingly complex text, Brittany must learn to first monitor and then search for further visual information when errors fit all three cues. The processing problem here is not the errors, but neglecting to monitor the errors. The teacher will think again about what would be the clearest, easiest, most memorable example with which to establish this new response of monitoring. "Effective monitoring is a highly skilled process constructed over many years of reading. It begins early but must be continually adapted to encompass new challenges in texts" (Clay, 1993b, p. 41).

Brittany needs to adapt her monitoring to incorporate more visual information than just the beginnings of words. The clearest examples to return to probably would not be *monkey/monkeys* and *lion/lions*. The only difference between the word in the text and the child's substitution is the very last letter. It is likely that this child knows about *s* as a word ending. She may read it accurately the next time without even realizing she had ever made an error. Since the goal is independent problem-solving on increasingly difficult text, the teacher will think about learning opportunities to help Brittany reach that goal. Returning to *monkey* and *lion* would not help Brittany learn more about reading complex text.

If, on the other hand, the teacher returned to *thing/trunk* or *sorry wash/shower* by asking the child to, "Try this page (or part of a page) again," and then prompted for monitoring at a high level, Brittany would be learning more about adapting her monitoring strategies. "Were you right? Try that again and think what would look right." The child would slow down a bit and check the words in terms of how they looked. Even if Brittany could not correct the error, it is important to reinforce and encourage noticing it. Self-corrections will not occur if there is no monitoring first. Clay states, "Children must be given the responsibility to monitor their own text behaviour, guided by meaning. This mainly involves pausing on the part of the teacher or parent as if expecting the child to solve the problem or prompting them to check" (Clay, 1991, p. 336).

In addition, it may be helpful if the teacher returned to the reading work of *did dude/don't*. Here Brittany did monitor her reading when her first attempt fit all three cues, but didn't look completely right. (She probably noticed *do*.) It would be important to praise the noticing as well as the multiple attempts even though the error was not self-corrected. In this way, the processing is being supported. "The teacher is more concerned to reinforce how the child worked to get to the response than whether the child arrived at the precise correct response" (Clay, 1991, p. 343).

Returning to the error *see/like* probably would not help Brittany learn more about problem-solving. This substitution is an example of an occasional lapse whereby cues were not cross-checked one against another. Brittany has a strong pattern of making all three cues match so cross-checking on cues in general has been superseded by better quality substitutions (Clay, 1993b). Brittany self-corrected her reading a few times and thus reinforced her own processing. As mentioned before, it is usually not necessary for the teacher to attend to such examples.

### Analysis of processing for teacher decision-making

The detailed analysis of the above two running records is intended to illustrate the process the teacher may go through to

- determine what the child can do and needs to learn to do;
- summarize the running record;
- look for patterns of responding;
- provide learning opportunities that will

move the child forward in the reading process.

A few notes of clarification seem to be in order. The sections "What the child can do," and, "What the child needs to learn to do," are examples of what the teacher may be thinking as she completes her analysis of cues used and cues neglected and prepares to write the "Analysis of Errors and Self-Corrections" at the top of the running record. The "Analysis of Errors and Self-Corrections" sections are provided as examples of the summaries at the top of the running records for these children. Notice that patterns are emerging here. It is not helpful to note every kind of error, self-correction, or cross-checking on cues (if applicable). Instead look for what the child *mostly* uses and *mostly neglects*—the patterns of responding.

The "Patterns of Responding" sections also illustrate patterns of behavior that may support or hinder processing. When analyzing running records note the presence or absence of:

- monitoring
- appeals/tolds
- re-reading before appeals/tolds
- re-reading after tolds
- re-reading to search and self-correct
- re-reading to search, no self-correction
- re-reading, no searching (repeating original error after re-reading)
- re-reading to confirm
- no re-reading to problem-solve
- no re-reading needed to problem-solve
- taking words apart
- comments about processing.

Finally, the "Learning Opportunities" sections were included to illustrate the possible rationale for selecting (and not selecting) teaching points for these particular running records. The teaching points are in the wrong order here, as they would have been selected before any detailed analysis was done.

However, with hard work and experience, it is amazing how quickly teachers can select teaching points which reflect the processing problems. When analyzing the running record after the lesson, it is helpful to also think about the teaching points and the prompts used to return to them. In this way, rationales and the level of prompts can be considered and selecting future teaching points will become easier.

"The teacher has a general theory in her head about children's responding. This is a theory she should check against what she is able to observe and infer from the individual child's responding, and which she should be prepared to change if the two are in conflict. So although reading behaviours are only signals of the inner control over reading that a child is developing, they are important signals which teachers should notice and think about" (Clay, 1991, p. 233). √√√

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# *Helping the Hard-to-accelerate Child: Problem-solving the More Difficult Cases*
## *Fall 1997*

*by Noel Jones, Trainer of Teacher Leaders*
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Anyone who works with literacy education is aware of children who have difficulty learning to read and write. Reading Recovery, of course, is designed for children who have the least early learning success and who are hard-to-teach. However, even from Reading Recovery teachers, we hear comments and appeals for help about a few children who do not respond easily even to skilled one-to-one instruction.

Clay includes a special section in her text for Reading Recovery practitioners (Clay, 1993, p. 56-57) entitled, "Children who are hard to accelerate." Her position is clear: "There is only one position to take in this case. The programme is not, or has not been, appropriately adapted to the child's needs" (p. 56).

### Lack of Acceleration as an Implementation Issue

One of the first questions Clay asks the reader is, "Are you operating the programme as required?" (p. 56). This question is addressed as much to administrators as to Reading Recovery teachers. Many factors are associated with the establishment of the program at the school that can keep it from operating as intended. The expectation for consistent, daily delivery of lessons is a particularly important factor.

In this paper, however, I shall focus on conditions that are under the control or influence of teachers and teacher leaders, and I shall leave aside the possibility that the school program or district implementation may be flawed in ways that may hinder children's learning. An assumption here, then, is that children are receiving consistent daily lessons and that other quality implementation conditions are in effect.

### Lack of Acceleration as a Teaching Issue

No simple answer can be given to the question of how to get a "hard-to-accelerate" child started on successful learning. Clay makes it clear that the individual teacher must assume responsibility to puzzle out what might be holding the child back. She advises, "First, check up on yourself as a teacher" (Clay, 1993, p. 56). Whether the school is, ". . . operating the programme as required," or not, this question is still highly relevant to the teaching of each individual child and should be the starting point for the teacher's analysis. The teacher needs to ask herself, for example, whether she is teaching daily 30-minute lessons containing all the lesson components—or whether she is perhaps changing the program in some way.

Clay goes on to advise: "In general, when the child is hard to accelerate he is finding some part or parts of the reading process difficult. Often he has learned to do something which is interfering with his progress, and he may have learned it from the way you have been teaching" (Clay, 1993, p. 56-57). In checking on themselves, teachers are advised to check their records carefully and observe the child's literacy behavior very closely to try to figure out what has been happening and what might need to change. However, she also advises the teacher, after a careful analysis on her own, to seek assistance from a colleague. "You are likely to have some blind spots ... and the opinions of colleagues could be most

useful for the readjustment of your programme. It has been one of the values of the Inservice Training sessions that teachers have been able to pool their collective wisdom on their most puzzling pupils" (Clay, 1993, p. 57).

Hard-to-accelerate children are challenging but also interesting. A teacher can learn a great deal through in-depth analysis of a child's processing and of her interactions with the child. Working with colleagues is also interesting and instructive and many times productive for teachers' learning as well as children's. In the following paragraphs, I will share some perceptions of working with hard-to-accelerate children based upon my own teaching and consulting experiences. I do not presume to cover this topic, as Clay's entire text, *Reading Recovery: A Guidebook for Teachers in Training* (1993), is devoted to the topic of working with children who have difficulty acquiring literacy. Nor do I presume to offer solutions for children whom others are teaching. The discussion below is offered in the hope that it may be of some use to others in posing questions about the children they teach and in thinking about potential areas of difficulty and different types of learning problems.

## Beginning the analysis: Checking on yourself

Although difficult for many teachers to accept, the possibility exists that the fault may lie in the teaching rather than in the child. At first, as they see children respond to the lesson framework and activities and to the individual attention they receive, teachers may focus on the *procedures* offered in Clay's text (1993) as the answer to learning problems. When one or more children do not respond satisfactorily to their use of procedures, teachers find a comforting explanation in the fact that all Reading Recovery children do not succeed in catching up with their peers. The realization may develop slowly that, for some children, intense analysis and problem-solving are necessary and that through these efforts some children making slow progress may begin to accelerate their learning.

Sometimes teachers hold, "...assumptions about the child that could be wrong" (Clay, 1993, p. 56). Teachers may assume, for example, that a particular child is not capable of learning. The culture of American schools has tended to foster low expectations for children who have great difficulty beginning the process of becoming literate (Allington & Walmsley, 1995). Teachers may easily develop misconceptions concerning the children they teach. According to Clay, "... children's responding can be very controlling of the way teachers respond, and teacher demands can be very controlling of how children will be allowed to respond" (Clay, 1991, p. 302). That is, a child's behavior may be leading the teacher to respond to the child in non-productive ways. On the other hand, the teacher's behavior may be leading the child to respond to learning tasks in ways that do not develop strategic problem-solving. For example, a child's learned helplessness or a teacher's tendency to offer support may lead to a dependence that hinders learning. Because it is so difficult to observe ourselves objectively, Clay urges teachers to problem-solve with a peer after beginning an analysis on one's own.

Another way that teaching can be responsible for a child's learning limitations has to do with level of difficulty. "Instruction can manipulate the balance of challenge and familiarity to make the child's task easy or hard" (Clay, 1991, p. 288). Instruction that is too easy or too hard can lead to inappropriate learning responses, ineffective strategies, and poor motivation. If teachers err, probably they should err on the side of too easy. However, given the pressures on teachers to produce learning gains, teachers find it easy to push too hard for new learning before a child has sorted out confusions or become fluent and flexible with current knowledge.

Even though great variability exists, all children—before they enter school—learn a great deal about the world and about language and how it is used. This ability and propensity to learn may be stifled, encouraged or rekindled by the ways we respond to students in the individual tutoring sessions of Reading Recovery. Finding the key that will renew a child's enthusiasm and initiative for learning is one of the challenges the teacher must meet for each child. The earlier a solution is found, the greater the chance for accelerated learning. Thus, Roaming Around the Known is a critical time. We must not wait long before we analyze ourselves and seek to make changes in our interactions if we sense that a child is not showing signs of initiative and independence in learning.

In the next sections, particular areas of learning will be discussed in which problems often arise in teaching Reading Recovery children. These discussions will not provide the answers for particular learning needs. The only sufficient buttress against learning failure will be a corps of Reading Recovery teachers who take Clay's advice seriously and who become skilled analyzers of children's learning and of their own teaching decisions. Reading Recovery is difficult because it raises the level of expectation for teachers. They must become observers, learners, researchers, experimenters, and problem-solvers in the truest sense, in addition to becoming experts in communicating and interacting with children. But the result is highly rewarding, not only in terms of children's progress but in terms of teacher learning and empowerment as well.

## Scenario: The child does not take on the task of learning

Some children do not easily develop an interest in reading and learning to read. A prime reason for that has been mentioned above—task difficulty. However, interest and motivation can be influenced by other factors. Vygotsky and others (Vygotsky, 1978; Rogoff, 1990; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988; Wertsch, 1991; Wells, 1985) have pointed out the social nature of learning. Literacy is a learning goal in our modern culture; however, a particular 6-year-old child who lacks adult and peer models may see no reason to enjoy books or learn to read. In addition, other inhibiting factors, such as abuse of many kinds, may have taught the child that learning or trying something new is far too risky.

Also, a child may be playing a game of control. Active or passive resistance may be the only weapon against pressures at home or school that threaten to overwhelm. Reading Recovery teachers can work against these tendencies by trying to influence the child's environment in positive directions. If possible, elicit positive support from parents and teachers. If their support may result in pressure and/or reprimand, seek to develop relationships for the child with other positive models. Become a stronger, more positive personal force in the child's life yourself. Increase your praise, give clearer models, check your expectations for this child, and continue to invite participation and response. Overcoming resistance to learning is one of the most difficult things teachers do. The longer a child remains in home or school conditions that reinforce fear and/or apathy, the more difficult it becomes to turn this around. This is one of the arguments for selecting the lowest children first—so that negative attitudes and patterns of responding can be broken before they become habituated and resistant to change.

## Scenario: Processing problems with text reading

The most significant processing problem that might arise is the inability to produce coherent, fairly fluent, meaningful responses in text reading. Some would say that the task for the beginning reader is to read for the author's precise message, but that is an endpoint of learning to

read. If we let this be the beginning point, many children will find the journey so difficult that they may develop all of the symptoms of reading "disability," including a lack of healthy confidence and a dislike of books and stories.

Children can begin to read for fluency and meaning even when their knowledge of print is still extremely limited. Through careful scaffolding, teachers can help the child generate the meaning and language structures that allow reading processing to begin. (By "reading processing," I mean keeping one's mind upon the meaning and language of a story while paying some attention to what is on the page. What is attended to on the page grows increasingly more sophisticated as reading ability grows, but so does the child's ability to utilize more complex meaning and language structures, a point too frequently under-emphasized.)

A teacher can help a child establish the meaning of a story by creating a readable text based upon the child's experiences or by engaging the child in conversation about the pictures of a book. Through the same means, the child can be helped to anticipate the flow of language that tells the story. Then, as the child "reads" this text independently, mis-matches which the child begins to notice become opportunities for learning. A sensitive, observant teacher selectively uses these mis-matches as teaching examples to help children discover more about how print represents language.

Teachers tend to undervalue children's early reading attempts that approximate text. Total invention with no reference to print guideposts is, of course, non-productive for the school-age child (although this is a positive step for the pre-school child). Many children enter Reading Recovery without the concept or the ability to match oral language to print on a one-to-one basis and will need to learn how to attend to print. Yet, I suggest that holding the child accountable for perfect one-to-one matching from the beginning may be premature. Not only do beginners lack understanding of print concepts, but they may not understand how oral language can be separated into words and smaller elements. Experiences in reading and writing are educative not only in teaching children how print works, but also in causing them to reflect on oral language and think about its units (Olson, 1995).

As Reading Recovery teachers, we need to divest ourselves of the notion that all of the learning about print-language correspondence needs to occur, or will occur, by text level three. Of course, we must be sure that children continue to sort out their understandings both of print and of language elements, and that they continue to grow towards accuracy in reading. And it is appropriate to expect precise pointing as the child works at matching speech to print. But pushing too hard can make the task difficult and laborious, thereby defeating the acceleration we seek to foster. On the other hand, for some children, inventing text may become a strong skill that blocks learning. The task of the Reading Recovery teacher is to decide when the child has sufficient knowledge of both print and oral language units to insist on a precise reading of text, when the standards of accountability for self monitoring must be raised, and when attention to fluency and meaning might carry priority over accuracy and cross checking.

Children who make slow progress in reading often reach a sticking point in problem-solving new words "on the run" (during the task of reading with attention on meaning). They may easily guess a meaningful word, and, sometimes, they even may guess a word that looks like the word on the page. But supplying a word that fits both meaning and letter-correspondences seems beyond their reach. Is the problem one of inability to respond to two conditions simultaneously? Or, have they not yet learned how to do this in reading? I suspect the latter is the case. If we watch these children during the day, I think we would observe them responding to multiple conditions simul-

taneously—for example, they seem to be able to look both ways for cars while calling to their friend across the street (perhaps better than adults can do!).

As they encounter new words in reading, these children tend to guess on the basis of meaning only (usually) or on letter information only. I have suggested previously (Jones, 1994) that teaching children to cross-check responses should precede, "getting your mouth ready," since the latter prompt asks the child to produce a response that fits both the meaning and the letter cues at the same time. As children learn how to cross-check, they are learning much more than letter-sound correspondences. They are learning how to become aware of the sounds of the word they first try (linguistic and phonemic awareness). Also, they may be learning how to search their own mental lexicon for words to match visual letter patterns. As they gain control of these processes, they gain the flexibility and fluency necessary to search quickly; soon, they are able to respond to both sources of information almost simultaneously.

For children having trouble trying words that fit both the meaning and the visual patterns at the same time, teachers need to observe carefully, throughout the lesson, children's ability to deal with phonological analysis. A teacher should observe whether the child is able to hear and write any sounds in words; identify and write some initial sounds without teacher assistance and intervention; analyze an oral word and predict what letter it might begin with; and, learn and retain knowledge of printed words.

Teachers also need to observe carefully what children are able to notice visually (using activities described in the section, "When It Is Hard to Remember," Clay, 1993), and what they habitually attend to visually while reading (using close observation and running records). Determining what part of the reading process the child finds difficult can suggest ways to fill in gaps that may enable a new level of responding.

### Scenario: The child has difficulty remembering

A complaint commonly heard from Reading Recovery teachers concerning hard-to-teach children is that they have difficulty learning and retaining new items of knowledge, such as letters and words. The child seems to have learned a word one day, but the next day s/he cannot remember how to write it or how to read it. The teacher may report that she has used the recommendations in Clay's text (Clay, 1993), particularly sections 4, 13, 14, 15; yet, the child still does not seem to retain the information. After unsuccessful efforts over time, the teacher may conclude that this child has a learning disability.

An important caution here refers back to the previous section. Too many children have not experienced and do not understand the ongoing process of fluent reading while they focus on the meaning of the story (using, initially, whatever help or scaffolding they might need from the teacher). For a number of reasons, many children find it difficult to learn specific items of knowledge (word and letters) when these become the emphasis of learning. In other words, the difficulty of learning items of knowledge may be real, but the issue may be exacerbated by the teaching emphasis to which the child is being exposed. Learning to attend and remember is not easy for young children, and the belief that memory difficulties indicate limited capacity is hard to resist.

David Wood (Wood, 1988) tells us that the rush to judgement about *ability* to learn is actually a judgement about what the child has not yet succeeded in learning how to do:

> *Deliberate attempts to commit information to memory are not the product of a "natural ability," but involve learned activity.* In fact they involve a series of activities. The skill in undertaking each of these increases with age throughout the early years of school and

beyond (Wood, 1988, p. 56).

Wood goes on to give examples showing how young children rather easily learn and remember things that arise as a natural—and often incidental—consequence of their activities. But they have very limited strategies for learning and remembering things that other people ask them to learn. Even if they are taught and reminded to rehearse verbal information (like a letter name), they will not often use this skill unless they are continually reminded. Similarly, they will not work to create and retain a visual image of something without adult intervention. Useful intervening activities include tracing, manipulating, and comparing, and teacher prompting to form a mental image of the object or sign.

One child I taught had the usual difficulties with recall that Reading Recovery children have. He would come to a word that he had written and read several times and fail to remember what it was. However, he had an amazing ability to remember which book he had read that word in previously. Before I could stop him, he would pull another book out of his book box, flip to a page that word was on, find it, read it, then return to the first book and go on reading. Since this wasn't an efficient strategy, I did not encourage it; also, I did not know what to make of his ability.

Looking back, his behavior seems consistent with Wood's observation about "incidental consequence of activities." It also demonstrates how strong this child was at carrying meaning in his head as he read and in using meaning associations as an aid to recall.

I have observed children who try "remembering" items in response to teachers' requests when they really do not know what to do to recall the item. Once they have produced the letter or word that the teacher wants (often with considerable teacher input and assistance), they forget about it and seem to carry forward no more memory trace than before. Just telling a child to, "Look at it," or, "Study it," does little good. Teachers need to be more helpful, more aggressive, as well as more patient, in helping children learn how to learn. Wood continues:

> If we want children to learn and remember things, we must often scaffold the process for them by setting tasks, arranging materials, reminding and prompting them. Eventually they will come to do such things for themselves (at least on occasion) and will discover how to rehearse and so on (Wood, 1988, p. 61).

Teachers need to reflect about how hard it is to remember the name of a person that was just introduced, or to remember where they parked their car at the mall. These tasks require sophisticated strategies and the persistent attention to remember that comes from awareness of how important it is not to forget. Young children not only lack strategies for remembering, they do not understand the purpose and they have not accepted the importance of remembering items teachers want them to learn.

Sections in Clay's text (1993), "Learning to look at print," and, "When it is hard to remember," are intended to help children who have difficulty learning letters and words. Yet teachers must still work thoughtfully to make the activities fit each child's needs. Often a teacher attempting to use procedures from Clay's text may, inadvertently, be telling or showing the answer so that the child does not have to remember it. One example comes from use of the individually-tailored alphabet book (Clay, 1993, pp. 26-27). If practice on the letter is always done with pages of the alphabet book in view, the child may simply be depending upon the model which he always sees before him. To change this, teachers may need to arrange other and varied situations for recall. For example, they might look for opportunities to present the picture alone (or the letter name alone) and ask the child to write (produce) the letter form from memory. Clay's text (1993) as well as Wood's explanations

(1988) reminds us how important it is, also, to practice this recall throughout the lesson in all reading and writing activities.

The point here is that teachers need to analyze the tasks they are setting for children. What is presented to the child? Is it the letter name ("dee"), the letter form (d), the picture associated with the letter (dog), or some combination of these? Next, analyze how the child is asked to respond. Is the child asked to trace, match, identify among choices, or reproduce from memory? Often, the learning activities involve only matching or identification among choices, when the teacher's concern is that the child cannot reproduce the form independently. Clay's text has activities for each of these levels of presentation and response. With careful analysis and a studied re-reading of these sections, teachers can find patterns and routines that should help the child learn how to attend and remember and begin to build a repertoire of knowledge.

Teachers working with children who find it hard to remember may not recognize the need for frequent practice and review of items that are only partially known or known and accessible only through one cuing system (such as writing the word). There is a tendency to move away from partially known items and introduce too many new learnings too quickly. At the same time, teachers may fail to hold the child accountable for using what s/he knows. Teachers can refer to page 40 in Clay's text (1993), "Locating one or two known (or unknown) words," to find excellent suggestions for getting the child to call up and use his developing item knowledge in the process of reading.

## Scenario: Processing problems in hearing sounds in words

If a child finds some part of the reading process difficult, the teacher must work actively and efficiently to find a solution. It is not satisfactory to say, "Johnny can hear final sounds but he can never identify initial sounds in words." Some way must be found to surmount this hurdle; otherwise, the child will find himself unable to respond to more and more of the teacher's questions and prompts. The more questions a child hears that he cannot answer, the more remote the possibility of accelerated learning becomes.

A pattern observed in teachers-in-training is to continue to be too helpful when a child finds phonological processing difficult. It is forgivable once or twice to give the answer when a child cannot respond to a question or prompt. But once the teacher is aware of the difficulty, what is called for is a careful demonstration that makes sense to the child. Identification of initial sounds in words provides a good example. Using the Elkonin boxes, children may be asked to complete the analysis task independently: push the token, identify and become aware of the sound, recall a word or letter associated with that sound, and write the correct form.

But if the child is unable to do this, the task may need to be broken down so that help can be given with the particular aspect the child finds difficult: awareness, or matching to a known word, or letter-sound association, or recall of the letter form. Clay suggests various activities to help the child develop: (1) attention to the *sound* features of language and of words (Clay, 1993, "Early learning," and Step I, p. 32); (2) awareness of specific sounds or sounds in specific positions (such as using a mirror to see how the sound is formed in the mouth, p. 32); (3) letter-sound associations using letter books and alphabet books; and, (4) writing the form ("Learning to look at print," p. 23-26).

## Conclusion

This discussion treats rather briefly only a few of the areas of difficulty that may underlie "hard-to-accelerate" cases. Although suggestions have been made about possible difficul-

ties, teachers must consider each child individually and realize that their analysis is only a hypothesis until they put it into action and observe effects. Relevant topics not discussed include: strong skills that block learning, monitoring, one-to-one correspondence, a number of language issues, and, the possibility that "writing may not be receiving enough emphasis" (Clay, 1993, p. 57).

In closing, three points bear repeating:

1. All children can learn; if they appear not to be learning, the program "... is not, or has not been, appropriately adapted to the child's needs" (Clay, 1993, p. 56).
2. The responsibility for puzzling out what might be inadequate in the child's program rests squarely with the Reading Recovery teacher. Working with a colleague and/or the teacher leader is encouraged; however, the teacher must, "First check up on [herself] as a teacher" (p. 56).
3. The aim of the program is to significantly reduce the number of reading failures within a system.

Good things happen when a Reading Recovery teacher figures out a way to enable a lagging learner to accelerate. There are positive outcomes in terms of the child's learning, in terms of the teacher's learning, and in terms of program acceptance by stakeholders. The work is hard, but the pay-off has far-reaching implications. √√√

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# *Teaching for Strategies in Writing: Maintaining the Balance between Composing and Transcribing Spring 1998*

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Reading and writing share common elements. Both forms of expression are driven by meaning and both use the same conventions. However, readers use their own knowledge and experience to construct meaning *from* text, whereas writers construct meaning *in* text. In the second edition of *Writing and the Writer* (1994), Frank Smith explains that the act of writing is a building process that is more driven by our intentions of what we wish to communicate to the reader. In writing this article, I attempt to communicate to you, the reader, insights gained from my reading of Clay and Smith that have contributed to my better understanding of the writing portions of Reading Recovery lessons. I emphasize the importance of helping the young writer monitor for meaning *while* composing and recoding the message.

As you read this piece, you are trying to extract meaning from this text. The task is somewhat limited by the lack of face-to-face dialogue. As a competent reader, you are highly successful at this task. The constructive process is what we are trying to help Reading Recovery students learn. Clay (1993) states:

> ... during the course of a recovery programme a low achiever learns to bring together:
> - the ideas
> - the composing of the message (which must be his own)
> - the search for ways to record it (p. 28).

In writing, we can think of two functions: composing and transcribing (Smith, 1994). *Composing* is described by Smith (1994) as,

> .... the idea the writer intends to communicate to the audience of readers, along with the words and grammar chosen by the writer as suitable to conveying those ideas for the reader (p. 120).

Clay (1993) suggests that the novice writer learns to compose messages (ideas) in his own words and language structures, then engages in a "search for ways to record it" (p. 28). Clay's explanation may be compared to Smith's description of transcribing. He explains transcribing the message as the physical effort in writing within the constraints of conventions of print: spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and legibility. Whereas composing occurs "in the head," as the writer gets ideas and shapes them into language, transcribing starts when the message becomes visible text.

The similarities between the two theorists, Clay and Smith, can be represented as follows:

**Composing:**
- the ideas
- composing the message (which must be done by the writer)

**Transcribing:**
- searching for ways to record it

Smith (1994) explains that,

> ... these two broad aspects of writing, composing and transcribing, compete for the writer's attention. The beginning writer needs to pay undue attention to the conventions of transcribing (p. 120).

Compared to the other language processes, writing is hard work requiring the most physical effort, and it is the slowest language process. Speech (*speaking*) can be delivered at 200-300 words per minute and still be compre-

hended by the listener. The listener can process up to 250 words per minute (*listening*) which explains why the rapid fire auctioneer (delivered at a speed of more than 300 words per minute) is incomprehensible to the less expert listener. *Reading* can range between 200-300 words per minute, but writing legibly is rarely more than 25 words per minute (Smith, 1994). The task of writing is formidable for the beginning writer who needs to pay attention to all of the conventions of transcribing: letter formation, directionality, spacing, spelling, matching symbols to sounds, etc.

As the novice writer is working hard to coordinate all aspects of composing and transcribing, we as teachers offer valuable assistance in helping the child maintain a balance between these two tensions in the writing process. We can help the young writer by teaching the child how to:

- express his ideas in meaningful units;
- shape his oral language structures into comprehensible sentences;
- learn how to develop a vocabulary of high frequency words for writing;
- hear sounds of words in sequence;
- use analogous thinking to construct new words.

While engaging in the physical effort of writing, the young writer is also facing the formidable challenge of writing for an audience that may be known or unseen. It is essential to compose text with an audience in mind. As we work with children in Reading Recovery lessons, we need to think about who the audience is for the children's writing and how we can help children develop a sense of writing for a prospective reader.

As I write this piece to you, I know my audience. I am motivated to communicate with a special group of professionals. I know the nature of Reading Recovery teachers as an audience interested in providing powerful lessons for children; we have common language and a shared mission. But for the child, we cannot assume he knows the relationship between writing and the fact that someone else will read what he writes.

The Figure contains a few examples of teachers helping set purposes for writing and determining possible audiences through their conversations with children.

**Figure**

| **Purpose** | **Audience** |
|---|---|
| • **Writes to record an experience**<br>*Let's write about what happened last night so we can read it later.*<br>(The teacher is sharing the permanence of writing versus the fleeting nature of talk.) | **Self** |
| • **Writes to explain**<br>*What a great story about how you got your gray cat!*<br>*Let's make a copy so you can tell your friends.* | **Class** |
| • **Writes to share**<br>(The daily re-assembly of the cut-up story summarizes a book just read.)<br>*Let's send the book home with your story so your Mom (Dad, etc.) can see how well you understood what happened.* | **Home** |
| • **Writes to inform**<br>(The child and teacher compose a piece about a newly-acquired strategy:)<br>*Let's write a letter to your Mom (Dad, etc.) about how you are learning to say words slowly to write hard words.* | **Home** |
| • **Rejoices in new skill**<br>(The child has made a shift in legibility. Copies are distributed widely.)<br>*Let's make copies of this wonderful story. It is so easy to read with the spaces you put between words. Give this one to the principal ... this one to your teacher ...* | **All** |

As Reading Recovery teachers you can think of many more (and better) remarks to develop a sense of audience in the young writer. The important point is that the remarks need to be woven into the fabric of the writing event almost like the subliminal messages presented by the media to sell a product. The highest ". . . praise for his efforts. . ." (Clay, 1993, p. 39) for a child is the reading of his story by an appreciative audience. Because writing differs from reading in that it is more driven by our intentions of what we wish to communicate to readers, developing a sense of audience lifts this exercise from a purely mechanical act to a true act of personal communication.

For purposes of clarification, I will examine composing and transcribing further as two aspects of the writing process. Even though the following discussion deals with the topics separately, they are integrated throughout the writing process.

## Composing Ideas to Write

First, I have a confession to make. Recently I brought a Predictions of Progress up-to-date on one of my Reading Recovery children. I was surprised (or is appalled the better word?) on how skewed the predictions for progress in writing were. All of the goal statements I had written were about recording language; for example, "The child will know how to write at least 40 high frequency words quickly and fluently." None of the goal statements was about monitoring for meaning or about composing. My goal statements for this child needed to be brought into balance. Since confessions demand repentance, I reread several sources in my search for a better balance of goals in writing.

*Dancing with the Pen* (1996) provided a possible new goal statement for the tentative revision of my predictions of progress. This book suggests the child will know how to select topics for writing through several means: valuing first-hand experiences and their personal knowledge of that experience; making use of their surroundings in and out of school; discussing their ideas freely; adapting and making use of their own and others' suggestions; and, showing initiative in selecting their own topics for writing at the end of the program.

James Briton (1970) said, "Writing floats on a sea of talk" (p. 164), and Clay reminds us, "First, talk with the child" (1993, p. 29) in the section on composing the story. But how does talk contribute to the composing of a story by the young child? Smith (1994) helps clarify the relationship:

> Composition is learned through reading and writing; it can also be fostered by conversation and discussion. Talking with other people in one sense is just like writing, in that it provides opportunity for the examination of ideas one already holds and for the generation of new ones. It is important to understand all the advantages of discussion. One can test one's own ideas on others, one can hear, borrow, and steal the ideas of others; but beyond that, new ideas can be generated that did not exist in any of the participants' heads before (p. 207).

The idea for the story needs to float to the top of the sea of talk, not drown. The teacher remains open to the ideas and converses with the child in order to focus in on one thought to be expressed in writing. This process requires careful listening and gentle shaping, always holding the meaning of the message foremost.

The novice writer has a multitude of ideas whizzing around in his mind. Furthermore, talking about these ideas is generated at a much greater speed than can be written. The listening teacher seizes an idea during the conversation that is full of possibilities for growth but also has some words the child knows how to write or can get to using his present strategies. A conversation may play-out as follows:

Teacher: *How did you get your lovely cat?*
Child: *He was in the middle of the road and my Dad put on the brakes* (amplifica-

tion of screeching brakes, reactions in the car) *and ...*

Teacher: *Did your Dad stop the car?*
Child: *We were going up north.*
Teacher: *So what happened after your Dad stopped the car?*
Child: *My Mom picked him up. He chews on the chair and eats spaghetti my baby sister feeds him ...*
Teacher: (focusing) *Tell me what happened when your Dad stopped the car.*
Child: *He ...*
Teacher: *Who?*
Child: *My Dad stopped the car.*
Teacher: *And then what?*
Child: *My Mom picked him up.*
Teacher: *Let's tell people that it was a cat that was picked up.*
*My Dad ...*
Child: *My Dad stopped the car.*
Teacher: *And...*
Child: *My Mom picked up the cat.*
Teacher: *Now everyone will know how you got your cat. Let's go for it!*

The teacher above prevented what professional writers reveal as the primary causes of procedural writer's block: having nothing of substance to say or being confronted with too many possibilities. In this short interaction before the story, the teacher opened the conversation with a question about the child's pet. The question was not so broad that he could not sort through his mental schema about his pet cat. When the chair-chewing, spaghetti-eating cat facts were presented there was potential for confusion, but the teacher refocused the conversation on how the cat was found. Maybe the next day, her prompt will be, "What happens when your cat chews on the chairs?" Or, even more titillating, "How does your cat's face look after eating a plate of spaghetti?" The talk is interactive but kept focused by the teacher who is genuinely interested in the child's ideas (Clay, 1993).

Lucy Calkins (1986) points out that teachers often appear to listen to a learner, but instead of giving a natural reaction, such as laughing, sighing, smiling, or reflecting, they tend to look for questions in an effort to "improve" the writing. The talk before story-writing needs to be genuine, not interrogatory in tone. Clay (1991) observes that if the child can carry on a conversation with the teacher, "then each is using a flexibility of language that is suitable for good communication to take place" (p. 73). During such conversations, children's ideas can surface and be polished to enhance writing stories.

Roaming Around the Known is the time to establish a conversational tempo geared to the linguistic style of the individual child as well as a time to explore interests that can become topics for authentic expression in writing. As stated so well in *Dancing with a Pen* (1996), "Learners write best on topics they own. This does not mean that they have always selected their topics without help or stimulus; it does mean that they have something to say in their own voice about their subject and, therefore, the best purpose of all of writing" (p. 27).

As the teacher and child face the unusual task (to novice learners) of writing messages in text, the teacher needs to focus on the importance of communicating the young learner's ideas. The blank page is a challenge for the teacher and the child: the teacher reminds the child of the intended message as the child struggles with the perplexities of learning how to transcribe his ideas. For the novice writer, the teacher guards the balance between composing the message and the challenges of transcribing it.

### Transcribing Written Language

Writing and reading text are two processes that entail similar challenges in using print conventions. One of these challenges is directionality. The novice writer must sort out spatially on the blank page where to start, which

way to go, where the second line starts—all while moving from the top to the bottom of the page. Another challenge is learning that oral language needs to be segmented into words that are represented in print with white spaces between them. Additionally, letter formation, letter size, and use of capital and lower case letters all present hard physical work for young writers. And then the child must learn how to spell which can be equally puzzling. The supportive, co-constructing-of-text teacher helps the child maintain the importance and wording of his message during the tough physical labor.

The young writer learns how to use a variety of strategies to record his message in print. In Clay's (1993) words:

- Sometimes you can analyze words you want to write.
- Sometimes you have to know how to spell a particular word.
- Sometimes you have to 'make it like another word you know' which means get it by analogy with a common spelling pattern in English (p. 35).

In the very first lessons the Reading Recovery teacher uses procedures to foster each of these strategies the child can use in Reading Recovery lessons and in classroom writing.

For closer examination of their purpose, I shall explore each strategy used to write text.

Sometimes you can analyze new words you want to write. In Section 6: Hearing and Recording Sound in Words, Clay (1993) explicates the activities designed to help the child think about the order of the sounds in spoken words and to analyze words he needs to write into the correct sequence of sounds. The child is encouraged to say the word slowly, listening and recording. "Say it slowly" is a prompt which will empower the child to approximate the correct spelling of words in classroom writing activities. Therefore, it is imperative for the child to know why he must say the word slowly and listen: to record the sounds he hears in *oral language* as letters in *written language*.

In the introduction to this section, Clay encourages us as teachers to choose from the child's orally composed story two or three words they can profitably work on together. Why two or three? The frequency and consistency of using this strategy (analyzing a word you want to write) on the practice page will help the child internalize its power.

Teachers need to take seriously the word "profitably." Early in lessons, the teacher needs to select words that will allow the child to feel the power of this strategy. If the 2 or 3 words chosen to place in Elkonin boxes are predictable in sound-to-letter (e. g., bone, bake), then the child will understand the value of applying this behavior to other situations. It works! If the teacher chooses words that are difficult to hear requiring a great deal of the teacher's knowledge of spelling (e. g., saw, night), then the child will not feel in control. As the child acquires orthographic awareness from constant exposure to print, he begins to sense the position of letters in less predictable words.

However, saying the word too slowly may work against the child who records every single sound heard much like the phonetician recording an unfamiliar dialect or language. In overextending words, children will hear too many sounds, e. g., the schwa sound after an overextended "b" sound; this confuses the child's work in Elkonin boxes. Frank Smith (1994) explains the adult's problem:

> We (adults) know something about spelling, we persuade ourselves that we can hear the spelling in some spoken words. For example we may claim to hear the 't' in the usual pronunciation of the word 'writer.' Children do not share the adult inability to perceive the actual sound of the speech; this is the second problem. They will attempt to reproduce the sounds like a professional phonetician (p. 198).

Clay (1993) reminds us as teachers to, "let him hear the sounds separated but in a natural

way" (p. 32). But she informs us in *Becoming Literate* (1991) that, "sound-to-letter analysis does not reign supreme in the hierarchy of skills to be acquired for very long. The child who has learned only a small reading or writing vocabulary begins to generalize about letter-sound relationships quite early" (p. 88). This leads us to explore the next strategy in learning how to record stories fluently and efficiently.

Sometimes you have to know how to spell a particular word. The high frequency words in the English language are needed often in writing text. The child needs to know why he is writing that word over and over again on the practice page, on the whiteboard, in the sand, and so forth. In Roaming Around the Known, the concept of what a high frequency word is in his language should be developed. Hunting across books, newspapers, or magazines for a particular word (e. g., 'is') gives the child a sense of its frequency. As a novice to text reading, how could he know that the word 'is' is used lots of times! During the hunt, perhaps a comment might accompany the activity: *This is a little word that you will see in books and write in stories the rest of your life.*

As the child writes a new high frequency word on the practice page during the writing portion of the lesson, he may need to be reminded why it needs to be learned and why it needs to be fluent. Praise the child when a high frequency word is quickly written in a story. "The child develops a sense of mastery when he writes a word which is quickly recognized by an adult" (Clay, 1975, p. 70). Recently a little girl's face lit up when she was told by the teacher: *Now I can read that word, anyone can read what you just wrote.* It's like the fuss made over the first word uttered by the infant that is understood by the adult!

The section on the procedure to help the young writer develop a "little movement programme" to produce these high frequency words (Clay, 1993, p. 30) is entitled: "To get fluent writing." The operative word for the teacher is 'get;' not, 'try to,' but 'get.' The use of this choice of word strongly suggests that the teacher must be insistent, persistent, and consistent in obtaining mastery of these little words. With a cadre of known words under control (not semi-control) the child will be able to get to more words and use the words in the classroom. As with all word work, however, fluency work on the practice page is a temporary detour and the teacher needs to bring the meaning of the child's story back into focus.

Clay (1991) informs the teacher that, "As the core of known words builds in writing, and the high frequency words become known, these provide a series from which other words can be composed taking familiar bits from known words by analogy" (p. 244). The child's ability to make analogies, "relating something he knows to something new, and classing the two things as similar" (Clay, 1993, p. 50) hinges on the known being under control and secured. This knowledge leads the child to another way of knowing how to record ideas efficiently.

Sometimes you have to 'make it like another word you know' which means get it by analogy with a common spelling pattern used in English. Initially, the teacher needs to model how this is done. For example, when Andrew needed the word 'new' for writing his story in Lesson 6, the teacher asked Andrew to clap And-rew, wrote it on the practice page, and brought the child to the second syllable sound similarity to 'new.' In order to assist the child with analogous thinking the teacher must know what the child knows and capture every opportunity to foster this linking from known to new words. As the core of known words and spelling generalizations increase, the use of analogies to get to new words should increase proportionally.

The teacher's role changes as the child becomes more adept at writing stories. Having fostered the powerful strategies discussed above for children's recording of their ideas, the teacher must encourage children to write

longer and more complex sentences to express ideas with clarity. Also, children will have less need to work on the practice page. A shift from demonstration to occasional verbal guidance of the child through text writing must occur to foster independence and practice orchestration of the strategies he has acquired; furthermore, the composing and transcribing of the story should flow from the pen with less physical effort from the child.

The joy of this fusion of composition and transcription is exemplified by the stories Andrew wrote late in his program. In Lesson 47, Andrew's story was: *We went to a concert. It was loud and some people were dancing.* The underlined words or word parts were done independently. The choice of topic had been selected without prompting by the teacher who was genuinely intrigued by the story. The sentences at this point in the program were still told to the teacher aloud so that composing was not quite integrated with the transcribing. The role of the teacher was to model the power of analogy to get to known word bits: "The 'er' in 'concert' is like 'her.' " " 'Ou' in 'loud' is like 'out.' " " 'Some' sounds like 'come.' "

By lesson 69, a teacher leader was called to assess Andrew for discontinuing when he wrote: *It is Christmas in (6) six days and Santa is comeing to town to bring Andrew some presents.* The teacher's prompt for the story had been: *What wonderful news do you have to share today?* Andrew did not rehearse before he began writing. He picked up the pen and composed and transcribed simultaneously. The role of the teacher was anticipatory in terms of trying to predict the traps in the English language for Andrew at this stage of his development. In synchrony while he was writing his message, the teacher whispered, *There's a 't' next you can't hear* (for Christmas); *Write the word for six, it's what grownups do; Say the word present so you can hear the last sound.* The teacher did not work immediately for standard spelling of *comeing* during the writing because the child was processing on the run; instead, she opted for a short mini-lesson when Andrew completed writing his story.

Andrew has a self-extending system in writing. He chose the topic to share, selected his wording as he wrote in his voice, using the third person to convey the message. The strategies for recording were so integrated that only by watching his lips did the teacher sense when he was using analysis; analogous thinking could no longer be overtly observed. Most importantly, he expressed joy at being able to share his news in writing. Andrew and his teacher had met the challenge of maintaining a balance between composing the message (his ideas and language) and transcribing the message for his intended audience: his parents ... or (perhaps) Santa Claus? √√√

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